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ABSTRACT

This self-study manual consists of 10 chapters of instructional materials dealing with different phases of the Systematic Employment Counseling Approach. Topics of the units include the foundations of employment counseling, employment targets, reluctance, strategy implementation, decision-making strategy, learning strategies, self-management strategies, combining strategies, and evaluating progress and outcomes. Provided in each chapter are an overview of topics to be discussed, chapter objectives, a summary, a knowledge check list, and skill building exercises. (MN)

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Individual Employment Counselling

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a systematic approach

Employment Counselling Division

Occupational and Career Analysis
and Development Branch

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Dr. Norman Stewart, Michigan State University, was instrumental in our conceptualizing and writing of this text. Over a nine year period Dr. Stewart and colleagues developed and tested a Systematic Counselling model for counsellor training. Their model has been used by several hundred counsellors and counsellor trainees. Dr. Stewart's conviction that this model could be adapted to fit the requirements and limitations of different counselling working environments led the authors to approach him to assess the feasibility of creating a model specific to employment counselling. This was the first of a series of consultations during which he provided concepts, models, editing and innumerable suggestions for improvement of the text. He has contributed greatly to the entire project. We are grateful for his assistance and for the opportunity of having worked with him.

Dr. Vance Peavy, University of Victoria, quite separate from this particular project, wrote for our Branch a text entitled "Decision-Counselling - A Pragmatic Orientation". With Dr. Peavy's kind permission, we have borrowed generously (and often verbatim) his ideas for the chapters of 'Foundations' and 'Decision-Making'.

Mr. André Paquin, Employment Counselling Division, Occupational and Career Analysis and Development Branch, has directed, with encouragement and patience, the development of the Competency-Based Training Program in Employment Counselling. His knowledge, management style and perspective are much appreciated.

FOREWORD

Employment Counselling is a client-counsellor process which involves identifying the clients' employment possibilities, establishing realistic employment goals, identifying the solutions and corrective action needed to achieve these goals and implementing a plan of action aimed at successful and satisfying employment.

Lynne Bezanson and Carol DeCoff have articulated and disciplined this area of counselling in such a way that there can be no doubt as to what is and is not employment counselling. But more than this, they have developed the process of employment counselling from a great deal of critical analysis of and insight into existing knowledge of counselling and of adult development. This text may well prove to be a model for the development of instructional texts in other areas of counselling as well. They have been fortunate to have the professional collaboration of Dr. Norman Stewart and Dr. Vance Peavy and to have the strategic direction of André Paquin but in the final analysis they alone deserve the credit for what must be considered to be a landmark in the development of counsellor training.

D. Stuart Conger

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PREFACE

One of the major voids within the domain of employment counselling has been the absence of a comprehensive, detailed model that provides you, as an employment counsellor with a practical approach for the entire counselling process. It goes without saying that you have access to a wealth of information about theories and philosophies of counselling, the counselling relationship, interviewing skills, strategies for helping clients and the dynamics of human behaviour. What is lacking, however, is a unifying, inclusive, concrete framework that shows how your knowledge, attitudes and skills can be incorporated into a practical and personalized approach for assisting clients.

Module 1 - Assessment Interview represents our first effort to deal with the aforementioned void. Based on the material that has already been presented to you in Module 1 - Assessment Interview it follows that you have some fairly clear responsibilities with regard to the client who is entering employment counselling. These responsibilities go above and beyond creating a favourable climate for employment counselling and beyond being a good and caring listener. It is your role not only to hear the unmet needs of your client as he/she describes his/her concern but also to help your client respond to his/her specific needs as well. It is necessary to help your client express his/her concerns in terms of behaviours which he/she was or was not doing in coping with his/her particular problems. Moreover you must always be on the alert for those solutions which your client has tried that may have become part of the problem and help your client in his/her exploration of them.

The employment counselling process, as dealt with in Module 1, has so far focused on learning about your client, his/her concerns and his/her environment. At the termination of an effective assessment interview, you and your client should have achieved:

1) a mutual understanding of your client's concerns by working through complaint and constraint statements;

2) client movement toward perceiving his/her employment difficulties as a contingency situation, that is, "If I am to resolve X, then I must learn/do/achieve/work on Y and Z; and

3) an indication from your client of his/her willingness and commitment to work concretely in the areas identified.

With the movement towards goal-setting the emphasis shifts from past behaviours (What did your client do/not do?) and present behaviours (What is your client doing/not doing?) to those behaviours that your client would like to learn or unlearn as a result of employment counselling (What does your client want to do/not do?)

Module 2 begins with a review and additional exercises on goal-setting in employment counselling. This is necessary because in Systematic Employment Counselling the formulation of goals and, whenever appropriate, employment targets, are construed to be the building blocks for all other stages in the counselling process. Having ascertained the counselling targets to be reached, your next task is to introduce the process that will help the client to attain them. The process for effecting this change is called a strategy and is a comprehensive plan. In Module 2, three major strategies and systematic steps for implementing these strategies will be taught. The strategies chosen have been selected with attention to those client employment difficulties which are most frequently presented to employment counsellors as well as those difficulties employment counsellors can be expected to work with most effectively. Following the completion of the strategy and the related steps to be undertaken, our emphasis shifts to the formal evaluation of what has been accomplished as a result of the counselling process.

The self-study manual was written to instruct you on a systematic approach to employment counselling. Systematic counselling is not original to us or to the CEIC. The model originated at Michigan State University and is dealt with comprehensively in a text entitled "Systematic Counselling" authored by Dr. Norman Stewart and his colleagues. The model has been used extensively and effectively in the training of educational counsellors. We have been working collaboratively with Dr. Stewart in applying this model specifically to the employment counselling setting.

In simple terms, a systematic approach to counselling provides a mental map or a blueprint for counsellors to follow as they work through the counselling process. Each step in counselling is broken down into orderly, reasoned units. While each step cannot be completed without the relationship dimensions of counselling, the focus of each step is on working concretely on the clients' presenting behaviours and problems.

Upon completion of Module 2, we are confident that you will find that the systematic approach to counselling will relieve you of the burden of deciding "what to do" during the different stages of the counselling process. It will not relieve you from using your intelligence, knowledge and human relationship skills in creative and flexible ways to meet the requirements of individual clients.

In the self-study manual we attempted to sequence the chapters in order to facilitate the learning and the practice of Systematic Employment Counselling. The first chapter provides you with a broad and general description of the basic concepts that form the foundation of working with individuals and more specificially with the Systematic Employment Counselling approach. Graphics describing the Systematic Employment Counselling system are introduced to aid in the learning process. Chapters 2 to 9 provide a detailed description and explanation of the procedures to be followed during each step of the Systematic Employment Counselling process. Specific suggestions are given and practical skills and techniques are described to enable you to carry out the counselling process in an efficient and effective manner. Finally, Chapter 10 serves as a summary chapter and as such provides an overview of the entire Systematic Employment Counselling system together with a discussion of commonly asked questions with respect to the adoption of such a system.

In addition to the general format of the self-study manual which, as mentioned earlier, has been sequenced to enable you to progress from the general to the specific in learning the Systematic Employment Counselling approach, some additional aids for learning have been incorporated into each chapter. Specifically, each chapter begins with an overview of the topics to be discussed and a description of the chapter's purpose. This section is followed by a list of the objectives to be reached by the end of reading each chapter. Each chapter concludes with a summary and a knowledge check by which you can monitor your progress through the material presented. Skill building exercises are also built within the content of each chapter.

Chapter 1

Foundations

Overview

Employment Counselling is a challenging and important career because it deals with people's futures. Employment counsellors help clients develop plans, identify options and make important decisions. The challenge is greater because many clients seeking employment assistance are experiencing financial and personal difficulties as a result of unemployment and resolutions to their difficulties are often needed urgently. Despite the urgency, counselling efforts must focus not only on immediate solutions but on the client's more long-range employment future and how to make that future brighter.

Desired futures are expressed as goals and voluntary change on the part of clients to achieve their goals is usually necessary. Employment counsellors assist clients to change, to give up ineffective or self-defeating ways of doing things and to learn more effective ways. A fundamental assumption underlying employment counselling is that behaviour is learned and can be changed. It is an optimistic view that change or growth is possible and that realistic goals can be accomplished.

Thus, employment counsellors assist individuals, during difficult periods, to effect needed changes to make their employment futures better - a complex challenge indeed!

The main purpose of this chapter is to promote thought and reflection on issues such as adult development and how adults adapt to crisis situations such as unemployment. We will then discuss some principles of adult learning (and re-learning) and their application to employment counselling. The chapter concludes with an overview of the Systematic Employment Counselling model which will be elaborated upon in detail throughout the text.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this chapter it is expected that you will be able to:

1. Explain a productive and non-productive way in which adults may react in crisis situations.
2. Explain the stages of loss which suddenly unemployed individuals may pass through.
3. Explain the stages of burnout as applied to those seeking re-employment.
4. Recall three implications of these stages to employment counselling.
5. Explain how employment counselling has an educative function.
6. List six principles of the eclectic approach which are applied within Systematic Employment Counselling.
7. Define in your own words, each of the 9 stages of the Systematic Employment Counselling model.
8. Given case studies, identify stages of the Systematic Employment Counselling model which are included and/or missing.

> In the ongoing flux of life, man undergoes many changes. Arriving, departing, growing, declining, achieving, failing - every change involves a loss and a gain. The old environment must be given up, the new accepted. People come and go; one job is lost, another begun; territory and possessions are acquired or sold; new skills are learned, old abandoned; expectations are fulfilled or hopes dashed - in all these situations the individual is faced with the need to give up one mode of life and accept another (Parkes, 1972).

The Century of the Adult!

Incredibly, we are only now, in the final quarter of the twentieth century, entering upon the century of the adult insofar as systematic knowledge of adult development, coping, adaptation and learning are concerned. Until very recently, adults have been viewed in simplistic and undifferentiated ways. Little notice has been given to the manner in which they differ from one another and from youth and children. Far too many of our ideas about adulthood have been based on stereotypical thinking, lack of data, prejudice and mistaken inference from knowledge of child psychology. The lack of an informed perspective on adulthood is especially unfortunate in an activity like counselling. In recent years this area is receiving serious attention and scientific study. It is also receiving popular attention as those of you who have read Sheehy's Passages or Vorspan's Mazel Tov! You're Middle-aged, will know. It is beyond the scope of this text to review the many current theories and thought-provoking ideas which now prevail. Rather, we will focus on aspects of adulthood which have particular implications for employment counsellors - these being how adults react to crisis situations in general and to job loss in particular.

Reactions to Crisis

Just pause for one moment to think about the number of friends around you who have experienced some personal crisis throughout the past year. Perhaps you yourself have had to cope with significant changes that have taken place in your own life. It is clear that more of us are experiencing more surprises or disruptions in our lives, more frequently than ever before. Some are intentional, others are not. In addition, as adults we continue to move through a succession of life stages. Some of these are relatively stable periods, while others (e.g. the mid-life crisis, death of a parent, menopause, loss of the parent role as children leave home) can be quite unsettling and cause us to re-evaluate the values and goals we are pursuing in our lives.

Research in adult development suggests that it is not so much the predictable events of one's life that create difficulty as the unpredictable. Sudden illness, loss, unexpected unemployment, imprisonment, injury, unwanted pregnancy, winning a sweepstake, — such change events are strongly self-impinging and frequently produce a condition of personal crisis. To some extent, crisis seems to be the hallmark of a good deal of adult life. Not only are there the crises brought on by the unpredicted change of events in one's life situation, but there are the more far-reaching changes of events - for example, role transformation such as "working" to "retired" or "single" to "married" (or reverse) or "parent of children" to "no-longer-parent".

Individuals employ many different adaptation strategies in the midst of crisis and counsellors should be quick to spot different adaptation patterns. An adaptation strategy becomes apparent when an individual first initiates some efforts to adapt to the crisis condition and ends with a resolution of the crisis condition (some crises seem to be unending or chronic). Adaptive strategies vary in their degree of activity, self-direction and effectiveness. As you read through this list of six ways in which adults try to adapt to crises, see if you can identify one or more with which you have personal experience.

1. Frantic activity. Racing from one alternative to another with little or no sign of planning or contemplation. Trial and error behaviour in the extreme. Behaviour which an effective counsellor will try to reduce.

2. Action. Characterized at the highest level of effectiveness by the deliberate implementation of a considered or habitually useful plan. This is a type of reaction that the counsellor hopes will result from understanding and critical evaluation of the client's life situation and clarification of alternatives.

3. Educative activity. Attempt to ameliorate or resolve a crisis situation through acquiring information or undertaking some type of learning.

4. Seeking assistance. Requesting another person (counsellor?) or agency for advice, information and guidance on how to cope with the crisis.

5. Contemplation. Thinking about the change event, the consequences for one's self, and considering various possible responses to the crisis situation. This type of adaptation does not include taking action although action may follow.

6. Withdrawal. Characterized by such behaviours as fleeing from the situation, denying that anything is amiss, distorted thinking, considering suicide, acting helpless, and dropping into inaction and silence.

How effectively an individual is able to deal with change is partly determined by just how the situation is perceived. People certainly vary in their capacity to cope with crisis. A counsellor can help to reduce panic and stress levels, resist the temptation to go along with an individual's frantic search for a "quick and easy" solution, and sometimes help the person to use the crisis as an occasion for growth. When changes occur together, it is usually helpful to sort them out and establish priorities. Although counsellors cannot always take the role of confidant, they can help persons-in-crisis to understand how important it is for most people to have a confidant with whom to discuss reactions, feelings, goals, and plans during a time of major change or crisis (Lowenthal, Thurnher, et al., 1975). But more will be said of the counselling input later!

EXERCISE I

1. Six ways in which adults try to adapt to crisis have just been outlined - frantic activity; action; educative activity; seeking assistance; contemplation and withdrawal. Read the following vignettes and identify the adaptive strategy being used:

   (a) Joe found out two weeks ago that he was going to be laid off. He was angry, frustrated and frightened. His mortgage was coming due in four months and he absolutely couldn't afford a period of unemployment. He stormed into the employment centre, demanded a job and when asked to register stormed out just as quickly. The next day he called in sick and hasn't reported to work since. He has told his wife he isn't returning to work until he has found his next job. He leaves the house each morning at 8am, returns in the late afternoon, is still frustrated and angry but very determined to be re-employed soon.

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(b) Jean lost her job two months ago. She has enough money saved so she doesn't have to return to work urgently. She has been seeing an employment counsellor for the past three weeks. Jean feels this job loss has finally forced her to look carefully at what it is she really wants to do. She has taken aptitude and interest tests, read fairly extensively on several career possibilities and now sees all sorts of possibilities she hadn't previously considered.

The counsellor has indicated to Jean that the time to make a decision is fast approaching. Jean indicates she isn't quite ready yet - there may be more possibilities she needs to explore and she doesn't want to jump to a decision she may regret later. The counsellor is beginning to feel a little frustrated in his efforts to help.

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(c) Ken has recently lost his job and is seeing an employment counsellor in order to determine how wise it is to move to a location where employment prospects might be better. He is very pleasant with his counsellor, appears motivated but at the same time is nervous and edgy. The counsellor sometimes has difficulty keeping him on track. He has been assigned several tasks between sessions but they don't seem to get done. Always, Ken has a very logical explanation. He has a large extended family and he is constantly busy helping them with one thing or another. To hear Ken talk, it would seem that everyone in his family is experiencing difficulty and that he is the only one available and qualified to help. This aside however, Ken is not making progress on deciding about his move.

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Out of Work! Oh no ...

Especially during early adulthood, major change events and crises are often related to the worker role or are affected by it. In fact, there are few adult experiences that can change our lives so drastically and few that present us with so many opportunities to build for a stronger, more productive and more satisfying future than work. Work is an essential part of man's life since it is that aspect of his life which gives him status and binds him to society. Work is a social activity. Unemployment acts as a powerful negative incentive. We all know that job loss deprives an individual of a place to work, the company of workmates, and a source of income. However, job loss does more than just that. Morse and Weiss (1955) indicate that unemployment deprives one of a source of activity and interest, a source of identity and self-esteem and a sense of purpose. Under normal circumstances, loss of income plays only a secondary role, that is to say, unemployment is most feared because it cuts individuals off from society.

Maslow (1959) and Sayles and Strauss (1966) indicate that there may be universal needs and desires that can only be satisfied by work: above all the need for self-realization or psychological growth. Sayles and Strauss (1966) speak of three forms of need satisfaction:

1. Physical and security needs. These relate to the satisfaction of bodily functions ... as well as to the need to be secure in the enjoyment of these.

2. Social needs. Since human beings are dependent on each other, there are some needs that can be satisfied only when the individual is helped or recognized by other people.

3. Egoistic needs. These relate to the individual's desire to be independent, to do things on his/her own and to sense accomplishment ... egoistic needs are chiefly satisfied through the job.

Once unemployed, your first thoughts are directed towards the very basics of life - the fundamentals, the "back to nature" needs. When you had a job, paid your bills, saved a little when you could, felt sort of successful and fulfilled, you could afford to worry about things like whether people like you and admire you, and you could concern yourself with where your next self-actualizing experience was coming from. Just think about it. What if you were fired? Your priorities would certainly change, wouldn't they? You would begin worrying about the basics: career, bills, and emotional stability.

Whether you realize it or not, you have just learned a little about Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of human needs! According to Maslow, it is natural to concern yourself with the essentials of life once you become unemployed. At such times depressing concerns come from all sides. How long will I be without work? Am I ever going to make something of myself? Will my savings hold out until I find something? How will my parents/friends/wife/ husband react? Do creditors repossess things? What will my kids think of me? What will my friends think? These questions are difficult to answer.

Thus unemployment can produce many changes in an individual's life and will influence the assumptions that he/she makes about the world. For example, assumptions about how each day must be spent will change as will assumptions about the sources of money and security. On a psychological level, the individual's belief in his/her own capacity to work effectively and to earn a living will also be altered. Not only will his/her view of the world as a safe, secure place change, but so also will his/her expectations of the future and that of the family.

According to Parkes (1971) even the loss of a job one has never had can create problems because one's assumptive world includes concepts of the world as it is and as it might be. The woman who might be promoted to a management position with a large firm rehearses in her mind the world she expects to live in. She may envisage mentally the picture of a large office, efficient support staff, challenging projects, and respectful subordinates. Indeed, it may be almost as difficult to give up expectations and fantasies as it is to give up objects that actually exist. Thus, if the woman in our example is not promoted she actually loses something quite important. She now has to cope with a change in her own assumptive world.

In our work oriented society, unemployment can be a rude challenge to one's sense of identity. We will now take a look at what individuals have been found to experience in the case of job loss due to redundancy. While the study discussed here dealt specifically with redundancy, it is probably a fair assumption that the same stages would apply to workers who lose employment for any reasons perceived as outside their control.

Investigations conducted to date suggest that the process of adjusting to redundancy can be divided into a number of stages:

1. Shock. The immediate reaction of many workers to the news of redundancy is one of surprise, shock, fear and a feeling of injury. Wedderburn's (1965) study of redundancy among railway workers supports such findings. Statements such as "the whole world has changed, you have a feeling of abandonment, loneliness, and you feel isolated" were common. Martin and Fryer (1973) also discovered that the announcement of redundancy came as a complete shock to most employees of Casterton Mills. In fact many of the workers could recall the precise time that they received the news in interviews conducted over 18 months after the fact. In response to the question "What was your reaction?" statements such as

"absolute shock", "I was shocked, shattered, we all were", "I was really disappointed. Shocked. I came home, I was really perturbed about it" were typical. In the latter study it is interesting to note that the community at large was equally shocked. "The Mills have been one of the institutions in Casterton. It was part and parcel of the town ... they never thought that anything could happen to it." Thus many workers panicked at first. They found themselves suddenly without a job and seemingly without alternatives. They were not sure which way to turn in these unfamiliar circumstances. Unemployment had changed their assumptive world.

The extent to which a shock reaction is experienced is a function of (a) the importance of work in the individual's definition of self (b) the expectancy of re-employment by his/her old employer and (c) the novelty of the experience.

Regardless of the extent to which the shock reaction is experienced, the confusion characterized by the shock stage leads to the denial or disbelief that "this couldn't happen to me; it is all a mistake." As Kubler-Ross (1969, p. 39) indicates, denial serves as a buffer after unexpected shocking news, allowing the person to mobilize other less radical defenses. This denial phase could be activated as a result of the initial confusion over job loss. Rather than confront the situation directly, the person may deny its existence and operate as if it really wasn't going to happen. Once it is no longer possible to avoid the reality of the impending job loss, there may be a period of anger about the situation. This anger can be both inward and outward. The person can be angry at him/herself for not taking action earlier and/or angry at the company for the termination order. In an attempt to reverse the decision there may be some attempt to bargain, i.e., "Maybe I could take another position with the company"; "Maybe I'm going to be an exception". This bargaining is often futile and the person may become increasingly depressed. In this condition the person is lethargic and simply wants to be left alone. With time however, there is usually the realization and acceptance of the fact that the job is finished and it is time to get on with the task of searching for a new position. This final realization is usually accompanied by an increase of energy as the person begins job searching.

2. Search and Maintenance. After the initial shock wears off, individuals often experience a surge of motivation and energy. Attention is given to job search activities - reading want ads, writing resumés, visiting employment agencies, and renewing old acquaintances who can be of help. Constructive, often creative approaches toward rebuilding confidence and re-entering the job market are taken. The individual at this point is challenged to evaluate career goals and establish a comprehensive job seeking strategy.

The job hunt may serve functions other than location of new employment. Many redundant workers found that an active job search maintained the work routine and gave them an excuse for continuing to rise early and to engage in activities outside the home. This is in keeping with the finding that the effective implementation of a job search is actually a full-time job in itself (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1979). It requires considerable discipline and the commitment of time and energy over a period of time. During this phase the rhythm of family life is maintained as the job search was felt by many members to be deserving of support.

Workers who managed to find work tended to make do with the first job that came along which satisfied minimal criteria of desirability rather than seeking out the most favourable opening. Although many workers wished to maintain their status and income, all recognized that jobs were scarce and it would be difficult (especially if they were older) to find work without having to suffer some loss in income, status or conditions of work. Statements such as, "I want to keep my status as a clerk for the purpose of getting a job, but I am prepared to stretch a point if other things are favourable, like wages and hours. If I cannot get a clerk's job, I am willing to compromise" were common among the workers in the Casterton Mills study.

3. Threat to Identity: Depression and Withdrawal. If joblessness persists over a long period of time - anxiety mounts. A primary factor in this stress is the fact that work is closely aligned with self-esteem (Herzberg, 1966). Paid work is a major source of personal validation and the longer the person is disassociated from it, the harder it may be to maintain a positive self-image. In addition to the self-esteem factor, other external pressures (i.e. living

expenses) also increase. The belief that "things will turn out all right in the end" is shattered and it becomes apparent that life cannot continue as if nothing has changed. Savings begin to dwindle and worries about the basic needs of food and shelter begin to surface. For some workers in the Casterton Mills study, financial difficulties led to the need to reduce expenditures and alter life-styles. One man stated, "I can no longer go to the club like I used to. I can't afford it." Even more important were the effects of repeated failures to secure employment upon individual confidence. Repeated failures at finding employment were depressing and for many, the act of collecting unemployment benefits began to symbolize the fact that society at large recognized that the redundant workers can no longer support themselves and their family. Their sense of identity with the outside world is challenged. During this stage, the redundant worker's identity within the family is also threatened as conflict within the family tends to increase. Thus at this point the entire fortress that one has built is threatened. Where does one go? Nowhere it seems. Individuals tend to fall back on old and unproductive habits. They become less creative and adaptive and more pessimistic. Little energy is devoted to forward planning.

4. Disorganization and crisis. In those cases where unemployment is prolonged, a period characterized by disorganization and crisis results. Research indicates that feelings of distress, hopelessness, uncertainty, and the belief that life and society has forgotten one are common. Although depression, divorce and suicide are all possible outcomes of this stage, generally it has

been found that individuals bounce back and survive the ordeal, but it certainly isn't easy. Re-entering the work force, rebuilding confidence, reaching toward new job achievements or the next career venture are difficult challenges.

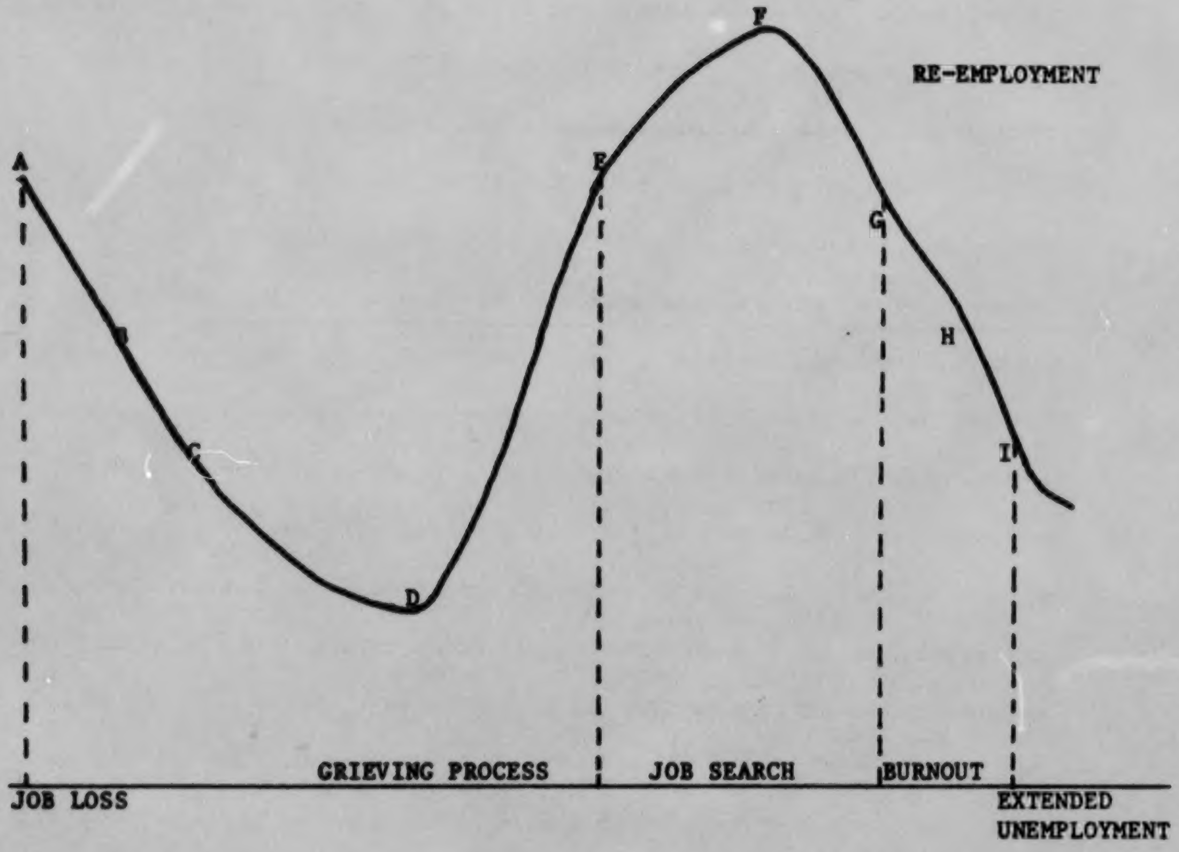
5. Readjustment. The final stage is characterized by adaptation to the situation that the individual finds him/herself in. There is acceptance of the fact that the achievements of the past can no longer be made standards for the satisfaction of achievements in the present. It is important to note that this acceptance is not necessarily a happy state. One still may long for the past, but one accepts that to continue, one must deal with the present.

Thus, the first three stages are associated with the individual's ability to deal with the loss of his/her status as a worker, the fourth is a transitional phase from which evolves the fifth stage, that of adjustment to a new status.

In dealing with the stress associated with extended job search there are certain patterns which seem to emerge. Since job search is a job in itself, it is not surprising that these patterns seem to resemble the process of "burnout" that is experienced by some workers. The "burnout" phenomenon has been described by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) and involves a progression from initial enthusiasm to stagnation, to frustration and ultimately to apathy.

The initial stages of job search are often characterized by high hopes, high energy and unrealistic expectations about job possibilities. Following this initial enthusiasm, job search efforts may stagnate as the reality of the situation becomes apparent. There are often not as many job opportunities as anticipated and it may be difficult to even arrange an interview. As the job search extends over time and repeated rejections are experienced there is often a movement toward frustration and anger. In this frustration, the need for a scapegoat emerges and government and big business often form easy targets. This is also a period when an increasing reliance on alcohol or drugs may begin to surface. Finally, a general feeling of apathy may develop. In this phase a minimum amount of time is spent in job search and a negative self-fulfilling prophecy begins to emerge. There is generally a low level of energy and an increasing lack of self-confidence.

Borgen and Amundson (1981) propose a detailed model to explain the dynamics of unemployment. With kind permission of the authors, their article is extensively quoted in the following section. Their model connects the loss experience (based on the work of Kubler-Ross) and the burnout phenomenon. They hypothesize that these form a continuous process which may be described and visualized as an emotional "roller-coaster" (see Graph 1).



Job Loss/Grieving Process

A - Denial

B - Anger

C - Bargaining

D - Depression

E - Acceptance

Job Search/Burnout

F - Enthusiasm

G - Stagnation

H - Frustration

I - Apathy

Graph 1 - Dynamics of Unemployment

If the desired end point of the continuum presented in Graph 1 is re-employment, then it is important to examine the forces along the continuum which may detract from or facilitate reaching the goal. The initial set of forces restraining effective job search are found in the first valley of the diagram in Graph 1. They include the denial, anger, bargaining and depression phases of the loss process and may present themselves in employment counselling settings as unfinished business related to job loss. Next come facilitating forces characterized by acceptance of job loss and enthusiasm related to job search. Ideally the energy made available by these forces leads to effective job search and employment. Clients who come for counselling with these forces operating are often energetic and cooperative. It is at this point along the continuum suggested in Graph 1 that many writers (i.e., Finley and Lee, 1981) seem to stop in their consideration of the job loss/job search process. However, it is important to recognize a second set of negative or restraining forces which can occur, particularly in times of slow economic growth and high unemployment. These burnout factors (stagnation, frustration, and apathy) come into play following repeated ineffective job search attempts and can present themselves to employment counsellors as intense passive resistance to any further job search activities. In cases where unemployment continues to extend, the individual again must adapt but the adaptation may be to an acceptance of unemployment as the reality, as the way of life. That is, one's energy may be placed into adjusting to being unemployed, rather than into continued seeking of re-employment.

In exploring the reasons for some of these restraining and facilitating forces it is important to examine the self-concept of a person as he/she progresses along the continuum illustrated in Graph 1.

At point "A" the person is a "worker", a position which forms an integral and valued part of the North American society. At point "E" the person has worked through the job loss stages and is an "unemployed worker". That is, the self-concept of the person still involves the idea of being a worker. Also at point "E" the completion of the grieving process can release energy aimed at regaining the position of worker lost at point "A". It is also at point "E" when effective job search can begin. At point "F" the person engages in job search activities which hopefully result in re-employment. However, if this does not happen and the person experiences repeated job rejections, he/she may find him/herself at point "I" seeing self as unemployed no longer as unemployed worker. The self-concept of worker is absent as is any meaningful hope of finding employment. The reactions of frustration and apathy at this point may further diminish the individuals self-esteem from "unemployed" to "unemployable".

It should be noted that the cycle that has been described applies most directly to those situations where the job loss is perceived as being "out of the hands" of the person(s) involved. There is a general feeling of powerlessness, although there may be several futile attempts to bargain. In situations where the job loss is initiated by the employee it is doubtful if all aspects of the cycle would apply. Under these circumstances the person may accept unemployment quickly and proceed with job search. We must also keep in perspective that the importance of work to the individual's self-concept is an extremely important variable.

While this model has not yet been validated experimentally, it is interesting to reflect on some of the possible implications for employment counselling - implications in terms of understanding and practice.

Consider for example the following:

1. Being suddenly unemployed is a crisis for most adults. They can be expected to employ adaptive strategies, some of which may be productive and lead to quick resolution (e.g. action, educative activity); others may be non-productive and lead to extended difficulties (e.g. frantic activity, withdrawal).

2. Regardless of the adaptive strategy, suddenly unemployed adults can be expected to be experiencing difficult emotions and may exhibit behaviours ranging from denial to anger to depression. These behaviours may at times appear inappropriate and excessive to the "employed" counsellor. Counsellor understanding of these as normal reactions to loss and counsellor reassurance to clients of the normalcy of such reactions may be very helpful.

3. The greatest counsellor energy devoted to assisting clients to find successful re-employment should occur at the same time that the client is experiencing renewed energy for job search.

4. Clients who have tried and met with repeated job refusals can be expected to begin to resist counselling efforts. The counsellor will be challenged to continue to reinforce and encourage the client to continue employment efforts.

5. Clients may benefit from knowing that burnout stages are normal reactions to repeated discouragement. Knowledge of what may happen may be a valuable way of avoiding its happening.

6. Counsellors can expect that more time and energy will be required of them to assist clients who are further along the unemployment continuum.

EXERCISE II

1. Adjusting to sudden unemployment is a rude challenge to one's sense of identity. Research into this area indicates that there are five psychological stages common in this adjustment. These five stages are:

- Threat to identity - depression and withdrawal
- Readjustment
- Search and Maintenance
- Shock
- Disorganization and Crisis

(a) Sequence these stages in the order in which they usually occur.

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(b) In your own words, explain what factors might precipitate moving from one stage to the next.

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(c) The extent of the shock reaction depends upon three factors within the individual.

(i) List these factors.

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(ii) List one possible counselling implication for each factor.

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2. Four emotions characterize the phenomenon of job search burnout.

(a) List these four emotions.

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(b) Identify the stage at which your efforts to assist clients should be greatest.

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(c) As a counsellor what client behaviours can you expect to encounter as your client moves from one emotion to the next.

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Those Requiring Employment Counselling

Individuals will cope with the unsettling actuality of unemployment in various ways. Many will cope with the situation and will take effective action without assistance; for many others, it is not that simple! Consider for example the following cases:

John has lost his job as a heavy equipment operator due to an accident which affected his vision and one arm. After assessment and counselling John was advised that because of his extensive experience with diesel machines he could receive training which would qualify him for a job as motors and controls tester. His performance on this job would not be hindered by his reduced vision and arm equipment. However, a period of training would be required.

John steadfastly refused to apply for the training, because in his words, "I've always been a big rig operator", and he claimed that he wouldn't be able to learn the duties of the new job which he believed required a "lot of reading." In spite of the counsellor's urging he was convinced that he "couldn't do the work."

John's "misconceptions" about himself effectively block his capacity to cope with the new situation, his learning and his performance. He has learned attitudes, values and/or conceptions which are, for various reasons, self-defeating. John's "misconceptions" must be dealt with before he will be able to move toward satisfactory job placement.

Consider also, the case of Sarah who repeatedly loses her job because she does not follow instructions satisfactorily. What actually happens is that she does not follow the instructions satisfactorily because she does not understand them to begin with and does not know how to request further explanation. Interrupting this self-defeating pattern of behaviour will require that the client learn how to request instruction, clarification and explanation. In effect, the self-defeating behaviours must be replaced by more viable ones.

Looking at the following list, one can see many examples of inadequate or incomplete learning and behaviours which are self-defeating:

1. Clients who need to learn job preparation skills to get a job.

    (a) Have poor personal presentation - appearance, hygiene, speaking, etc.

    (b) Show self-defeating habits that prevent getting or keeping jobs.

    (c) Do not know how to interview effectively with employers (showing enthusiasm, not smoking, good posture, how to answer questions, showing knowledge of company and its products.)

    (d) Do not know how to write a resumé.

    (e) Do not know their aptitudes or interests.

2. Clients who have a noteworthy barrier to employment and as a result do not know how to deal with employers or employment.

    (a) Prison record or probation.

    (b) Emotional difficulties.

(c) Mental illness hospitalization.

(d) Alcohol or drug addiction.

(e) Handicapped persons who are ALSO not-ready for employment or have unrealistic job goals, etc.

(f) Need supportive services to help get job - legal aid, clothing, food, housing, education, etc.

3. Clients who lack information on career development, educational resources, or training resources.

4. Clients who attempt to change jobs and experience unusual trouble.

5. Clients who have unrealistic job goals.

   (a) Insist on certain jobs when there are no openings, AND ALSO virtually no hope for any openings any time soon.

   (b) Haven't had enough education or experience for job wanted and stick to that choice.

6. Clients who keep changing employment goals.

7. Clients who manage to continually get themselves fired.

8. Clients who will not describe the type of work they want or won't make a job choice.

9. Clients who are re-entering the labour force and are not at all sure of their skills and abilities.

10. Clients who have never worked and don't know their skills.

Thus, in addition to the psychological distress of unemployment, much distress is due to skill deficits, inhibitions and inappropriate responses. For example, many individuals have failed to learn the interpersonal skills necessary to perform well in a job situation. Such skill deficits can cause considerable distress and can interfere with steady employment. Other individuals know how to perform the desired responses but are inhibited from doing so because they have learned to fear situations which hold only mild threat if any threat at all. Counsellors are frequently called upon to help clients overcome employment-related fears and inhibitions. Counsellors are also asked to help clients modify or eliminate inappropriate responses. Inappropriate responses are those that may have some immediate utility but which in the long run are counter-productive. Annoying attention-seeking behaviours, displays of temper in response to mild frustration, retreat from conflict situations, and escape from depression through alcohol or drugs are examples of behaviours that have some immediate rewards but in the long run are not as rewarding as alternate responses might be. These responses are inappropriate when they are used indiscriminately. In some situations, physical or psychological retreat might be the best response. In other situations some assertive response might be in the individual's best interest. Many individuals depend upon limited responses which are inappropriate in a particular set of circumstances. Crying is a perfectly legitimate response, but most of us would agree that one who cries whenever confronted with criticism or frustration has a limited response repertoire and is using this one response inappropriately. Expressions of anger are also legitimate, but violent outbursts of temper for mild frustrations are inappropriate.

Counselling as an Educative Activity

Clearly then, many clients seeking employment counselling simply do not know how to perform the skills necessary to work effectively, relate effectively, or learn effectively. In order for the appropriate skills to be learned, the inappropriate response will usually have to be identified and "unlearned". From this perspective, the counsellor has an educative function. Specifically, the counsellor has the educational task of 1) searching for client responses or behaviours which have limiting, self-defeating or other undesirable consequences for the client, and 2) providing the guidance, instruction and conditions that will enable the client to learn appropriate responses.

In viewing counselling as a learning process, it must clearly be disassociated from the medical model. Unless a client is suffering from a biochemical deficit or imbalance, then he/she is no more sick than someone who wants to type and doesn't know how. The counsellor is no more "curing" his/her client than the typing teacher is "curing" students. Clients may indeed have learning deficits and thus not know how to do this or that task, may not know how to relate well to other people, may not know how to learn effectively and may even have learned a very deficient concept of themselves, but having learning deficits does not make them "sick", neurotic, or grist for the "clinical mill". Even unsatisfying relationships usually indicate learning deficits rather than signalling neurosis.

Counsellors should not aim to cure clients, nor even help them to become "better" people. Rather, they should aid clients to change in order to achieve some learning objective of the client, or of the counsellor, or both. When counsellors see their role clearly as educators, they are in a better position to promote meaningful benefits to individual clients, and to clients of more types, than when they view themselves as therapists or gurus who cure people.

Assuming that we accept counselling as a learning process, two issues become relevant; namely, how do adults learn and how can this learning be facilitated through the counselling process.

How Adults Learn

The distinguished social psychologist, Kurt Lewin (1948) outlined three different types of [adult] learning.

1. a change in cognitive structure (for instance, acquiring new knowledge such as learning how to write a resumé or learning to analyze and describe one's assets and limitations as a worker)

2. a change in motivation (for example, acquiring a like or dislike for a new type of work; a change in belief or attitude, for example, changing one's stereotypic attitudes with reference to ageism, sexism, race, class, etc.; or a change in ideology for example, shifting from anti-union to pro-union status)

3. a change in behaviour as in developing a skill or learning how to execute a routine.

Lewin was a Jew driven from his homeland during the regime of the Third Reich His mother died in a gas chamber. He was motivated by a passion to find ways to use research and theory as practical guides in social practice and action. Throughout all of his studies there ran a central concern which can be stated as follows:

> How (through what learning process) do men and women alter, replace, or transcend patterns of behaving, thinking, believing, and willing by which they have managed and justified (or attempted to manage and justify) their lives up until now into patterns of action, thinking, believing and willing which are at once more personally fulfilling and socially constructive?

This concern suggests that adult learning is not just a matter of learning new facts, behaviours, concepts and values but in addition requires that something (behaviours, attitudes, etc.) must also be unlearned or abandoned in the process. What is faced is not simply education but more correctly re-education. This implies: 1) changes in the self, and 2) the working through of self-supported resistances to changes. Since self-supported resistances are usually sustained by norms and relationships of others (especially relationships with the members of groups to which the individual belongs, or aspires to belong), effective re-education of an individual may also require changes in his/her immediate environment. At the very least counsellors should not ignore the considerable influence environmental factors can have in influencing the individual's propensity for change.

Some of the basic Lewinian principles of learning, useful as general guidelines for adult learning especially within the context of counselling, include:

1. The processes involved in the acquisition of the normal and abnormal are fundamentally alike. Due to the influence of theorists (and practitioners) who have a tendency to classify individuals, "education" for the normal has become almost a separate entity from "therapy" for the pathological and "rehabilitation" for the deviant. For those people who are classification-bound, classifications (such as "normal", "abnormal", "deviant", "under-motivated", etc.) are very real and as such all those who are labelled as "normal" for example are considered to be quite different from individuals placed in another classification. This tendency to differentiate individuals by virtue of their classification is a serious source of confusion both conceptually and practically. When the "normal" and the "abnormal" as well as the "deviant" are considered to be different only in terms of degree and to rest on common processes of learning, then one is able to focus on the reality of individuals in their relationships and situations and need not be misled or confused by labels. This is important in counselling.

2. The learning process must take into account the social and cultural milieu of the individual. The influence of social group membership on our behaviour is great. Formally and informally society indicates the behaviours that are required, prohibited, expected, or disapproved. Emphasis upon adult learning and change without taking into account the reinforcing and influencing impact of the social and cultural milieu on the individual can only lead to difficulties. Behaviours are influenced by how others react to them. Behaviours that gain attention, praise, appreciation, or other positive verbal or non-verbal signals

will be encouraged. Those behaviours that are met with general disapproval, ridicule, and other negative feedback from important others will be discouraged. It is a frequent mistake in counselling to place the entire burden of adaptation and adjustment upon the client. It is often beneficial in counselling to not only take into account the influence of significant others (supervisors, peers, family members) in a client's life but also encourage the involvement of significant others in any counselling effort to bring about change in the client's behaviours, concepts, or attitudes.

3. Prejudices are functionally equivalent to wrong concepts. The story of the man who thought he was dead illustrates how when we have an incorrect conception (prejudice) we will persist in our concept even against very compelling evidence to the contrary.

Mr. X, who believed himself to be dead, resisted all evidence contradicting his belief which was presented to him by his wife, his friends and his psychiatrist. As a last ditch effort his psychiatrist got him to clearly admit that dead men don't bleed. Then he secured Mr. X's permission to prick his finger with a pin. When the blood came, Mr. X, astonished, exclaimed, "Doctor, I was wrong. Dead men do bleed."

What this principle tells us is that we cannot rely upon experience alone to change concepts or prejudice. Replacing an incorrect concept with a correct one requires that an individual be able to take into consideration not only his/her own but also alternative concepts. Many of you are undoubtedly familiar with clients who, when presented with correct evidence, new information, or alternative explanations, merely tighten their own self-defenses. According to Lewin, clients must develop and accept an ambivalence in themselves toward the adequacy of their own concepts (prejudices). Without ambivalence, clients see no need to submit their concepts or prejudices to examination, testing and possible alteration (learning).

4. Social action no less than physical action is steered by perception. The meaning of this principle is that action changes (behaviours) do not necessarily result from changes in beliefs, values or knowledge. The crucial element in determining action changes is changed perception of self and situation. For example, a person may learn how to construct a resumé but may not use a resumé until he/she perceives that as a meaningful act in a specific situation. Perception change makes constructive action change possible. This principle advises the counsellor that openness and receptivity to new knowledge and new behaviour development may follow, rather than precede, change in perception. The client who sees (perceives) self as capable is much more likely to act capably (or be willing to learn those skills necessary to act capably) than the client who perceives self to be a failure or to act incompetently.

The Contributions of Counselling Theory

We have called counselling a learning process, a process that results in relatively permanent changes in clients. We have also taken a brief look at several principles underlying adult learning. We are now ready to take into consideration such issues as "How can learning be facilitated? What can counsellors do to help clients learn to be more responsible and self-directed? What can clients do to become the kinds of individuals they want to be?" Answers to these questions have been sought by counselling psychologists from a number of different theoretical orientations. These many theoretical viewpoints can be categorized under three general approaches with which you are familiar: affective approaches, cognitive approaches, and behavioural approaches. The affective approaches stress the importance of feelings in understanding and helping clients learn to be more self-actualizing. The cognitive view emphasizes the thought processes and the influence of ideas and beliefs on feelings and behaviour. Behaviourists attend to behaviour and to the social and environmental influences on behaviour in attempting to help individuals achieve their goals.

People, of course, are feeling, thinking, and behaving creatures. These three parts of our nature are intertwined and not independent of one another. No one of the three theoretical approaches would deny the influence of the other two aspects of human nature. The three approaches differ in the emphasis they give to a particular aspect.

We will briefly discuss these three major approaches to helping clients change, not for the purpose of finding the single best approach but to find the values in each. After considerable research, no one approach has emerged as clearly superior to the others. Where there was once considerable debate concerning which view was the most productive, it is now generally acknowledged that each has a contribution to make in understanding personality development and in assisting clients to realize their potentials.

The Affective Approach

Humanistic, existential, client-centered and Gestalt counselling are examples of the affective approach. They trace their origin to Abraham Maslow, who was among the first psychologists to become interested in the problem of high-level human functioning. His assumption that all humans possess a set of genetically based tendencies that are good and self-actualizing is the basis of the affective approach to counselling. This view holds that one who is truly in touch with his/her own feelings will develop and actualize to the fullest. Human potential is seen as developing from within rather than being shaped from without. Maladaptive behaviour is explained as caused by external forces, parents, schools, and significant others, that frustrate and disturb the individual's essential nature. In this condition, individuals act on the values and experiences of others rather than on their own. They, in effect, lose contact with their own internal guidance system, and the self-actualizing tendency can no longer operate.

Carl Rogers is unquestionably the major figure in the development of this view. He sees individuals as having a positive growth force that operates well if individuals have direct access to their own experience. When they deny or distort their experience and accept contrary values to please others from whom they want love, the positive growth force cannot function, and problems arise.

The attempt in counselling using the affective approach is to provide a relationship between the client and counsellor in which feelings and thoughts may be freely expressed and examined so that clients can regain contact with their own experience and feelings. As these again become the individual's basis for values, the self-actualizing tendency is again in control.

This approach largely ignores the environmental or situational influences on behaviour, but has pointed out the importance of seeing and feeling from the client's perspective in order to understand and be of assistance to clients. For the client, his/her perceptions are facts. The world for each individual is the view he/she has of that world. Those of us who might prefer to focus on environmental situations or events in understanding human behaviour may overlook the influence of how these events and situations are perceived by clients. Calling attention to the importance of the client's perceptions is a valuable contribution of this approach.

In working with clients, counsellors using the affective approach attempt to help clients ...

1. Deal with the here and now.
2. Experience the real and not the imagined.
3. Avoid intellectualizing life and instead experience it.
4. Expand awareness using all the senses.
5. Attend to one's own values.
6. Take full responsibility for one's own actions, feelings, and thoughts.

A major contribution of this approach and one that has influenced all other counselling approaches has been the emphasis on the quality of the counselling relationship on the effectiveness of counselling. Carl Rogers has identified the specific conditions or personal qualities that must be present if a counselling relationship is to be helpful.

1. The counsellor must have a genuine and unconditional liking for the client.

2. The counsellor must provide an empathic and sensitive understanding of the client's private world.

3. The counsellor must be able to communicate the above qualities to the client.

Pointing to the importance of the relationship in helping situations and identifying the qualities and conditions that create a helping relationship have been monumental contributions to counselling and human relations.

The Cognitive Approach

This approach stresses the client's rational and cognitive processes. It holds that behaviours and feelings are influenced by thoughts. When one is guided by rational processes, goals can be achieved. It is when one behaves irrationally that problems occur.

There are two forms of the cognitive approach. The first utilizes the problem-solving, decision-making method:

1. State the problem.
2. Identify and accept ownership of the problem.
3. Propose possible alternative solutions.
4. Evaluate each alternative.
5. Implement one or more alternatives.
6. Evaluate the implementation.
7. Generalize to other problems.

All problems involve decisions, but some client concerns are primarily decision problems and are brought to counselling because clients lack a systematic way of dealing with them. Counsellors should be able to help clients make these decisions, but it is not enough just to give help with the specific decision to be made. A general goal of counselling is that the client will be better able to deal with future problems. This means that counsellors not only must assist clients with the immediate problem but also must be able to teach decision-making skills to prepare clients to cope with problems they encounter in the future.

A second and increasingly important cognitive approach is viewing maladaptive behaviour and inappropriate feelings as resulting from faulty thinking. Albert Ellis has long held and discussed this view. He has recently found increased support for his ideas from other cognitive psychologists. This approach holds that emotions are largely controlled by cognitive processes. Human misery, according to Ellis, is caused by emotional responses that are caused not by the actual life circumstances but by the way in which the individual reacts cognitively. Unhappiness is not caused by external events but by the thoughts or words an individual says to him or herself regarding those events.

Counselling from this perspective attempts to discover the erroneous beliefs that are the basis of the irrational thoughts that produce the unhappy emotional reactions. The counsellor supports the client but attacks the irrational belief system. This approach is based upon two assumptions:

1. Problems are caused by irrational beliefs that have negative consequences.

2. People are capable of changing their belief systems by learning how to refute these irrational beliefs.

There are some irrational ideas that are prevalent in our society, according to Ellis. For example, the idea that one has to perform perfectly or it is not worth trying, or the idea that everyone should like us, and if such is not the case life is not worthwhile. It is not uncommon to meet clients with these or other irrational beliefs that prevent them from acting in their own interests. This cognitive approach gives us a way to understand and work with these clients. You will recall, from the Assessment Module, the importance of the work of Albert Ellis.

The Behavioural Approach

Behaviourists would not deny that people have feelings and thoughts that influence their lives. They point out, however, that behaviour is all that we have access to. Feelings and thoughts are themselves inferred from behaviour. Personality is properly a study of behaviour. They also maintain that other counselling approaches neglect the influence of environment on behaviour. Personality development can be explained by identifying the environmental influences that elicit certain kinds of behaviour and the reward and punishment consequences that shape, encourage, or discourage human responses.

The behavioural approach uses the scientific methodology to discover strategies to help clients with specific kinds of problems. It does not employ one strategy for all problems but seeks the best strategy for a given client with a particular problem. It advocates accountability and seeks evidence to judge the effectiveness of counselling techniques.

Counsellors using the behavioural approach should possess several abilities.

1. An ability to identify client behaviours that cause problems or prevent problem solutions.

2. An ability to identify the conditions that elicit inappropriate responses.

3. An ability to observe and record precisely and systematically.

4. An ability to identify the consequences of a behaviour that influence its future performance.

Perhaps the most important skill for a behavioural counsellor to possess is the ability to know when counselling techniques are working well and when they are not, so that they can be modified if necessary. It is this emphasis on monitoring the effects of counselling that has been this approach's greatest contribution.

The Eclectic Approach

The different counselling approaches have borrowed heavily from one another. The differences among them are less distinct than they once were. There have been a number of attempts to bring together the best elements from a variety of approaches to form an eclectic approach. In some respects the reality approach of William Glasser is eclectic. The major elements in his approach include:

1. Getting involved, being personal, communicating caring in words and actions.
2. Staying in the here and now.
3. Helping clients evaluate their own behaviour by asking, "How is it helping you or others?"
4. Planning behaviour change.
5. Developing a written contract specifying the changes to be made.
6. Accepting no excuses for client failure.
7. Allowing the client to suffer the natural consequences of inappropriate behaviours but not imposing punishment.

This approach emphasizes the relationship as a central element in the counselling process. It places responsibility on the client and expects clients to be responsible. It helps the client identify the natural consequences of his/her behaviour and seeks commitment from the client to change behaviours that have negative consequences.

But what about Employment Counselling?

One can spend hours debating as to what theoretical approach best suits employment counselling and best meets the needs of our clients. Obviously, there is no simple answer! No experienced employment counsellor would agree that the relationship dimension of the counselling process is not important; put more simply, that those clients who are discouraged, angry, frustrated would not derive some benefit from exposure to a counselling process which is based upon the establishment of a facilitative relationship characterized by trust, care, acceptance, etc.... However, clients in an employment setting need more from counselling than feeling better about themselves; they want tangible results such as a decision made or job placement. What approach best meets their needs? Simultaneously, there are those clients who are unmotivated and who want to beat the system; they are convinced that life owes them a job and a living. What approach will best place them on the road toward problem resolution?

And to continue ... what approach will best suit employment counsellors, with a very large case load and a limited amount of time to be invested with each client? Again there is no simple answer! It should be clear, however, that no one theory can be adopted for helping clients resolve all issues interfering with employment.

The Eclectic approach based on principles derived from all theories and on counselling as a learning/educative process may be the closest we can come. These principles, stated a little differently, are:

1. Individuals are responsible and capable of identifying their own goals and making their own decisions.

2. Even though the environment exerts an influence and must be taken into serious account, individuals are more able to direct their own lives than they know.

3. Individuals are capable of learning new and more productive behaviours, feelings, and ways of thinking about things.

4. Counsellors don't teach; experiences teach; counsellors perform an educative function by suggesting and providing learning experiences to help clients change.

5. Counsellors should use a wide variety of resources and strategies to help clients attain counselling goals.

6. Monitoring client performance and evaluating the counselling process are integral parts of the process.

The aforementioned principles form the core of the Systematic Employment Counselling model which we will be teaching you in the present module. It is interesting to note that in some ways the Systematic Employment Counselling model can be perceived as "theory free" in the traditional sense that it does not support a particular theory; that is, a systematic employment counsellor would not describe him/herself as client-centered/behavioural/cognitive and so on. As we proceed through Module 2 you will, nevertheless, soon realize that elements of theories are very present in the model. Specifically, emphasis is placed upon the importance of a facilitative relationship throughout the counselling process; the cognitive approach is very obvious in our decision-making strategy; the behavioural approach is apparent in the learning strategy. Thus a variety of approaches have been integrated into a method for moving clients towards problem resolution. The Systematic Employment Counselling model is designed to work in a setting which is time-bound and goal-oriented. An overview of the Systematic Employment Counselling model will be provided in this chapter but first let's take a look at general suggestions or guidelines for counsellors beginning to learn to apply the model:

These guidelines are formulated from a behavioural perspective. This means that they emphasize counsellor behaviours and goals and treat counselling as a learning process.

1. The counsellor should be able to establish psychological contact. Clients look for counsellors who are reliable, attentive, and caring. An effective counsellor knows how to establish and maintain a reliable, caring attitude. This begins when client and counsellor open conversation in which the exchange of small-talk or chit-chat to put the client at ease is necessary and useful.

However, such small talk should be put aside very quickly by the counsellor saying something like "What brings you here?" or "Mr. Smith mentioned that you might be stopping by - what can I do for you?". These statements begin to define the purpose of the counselling session and set a down-to-work tone.

A quiet, friendly, down-to-business opening which brings both the client and the counsellor to the purpose of the meeting is desirable. The counsellor should not initiate conversation which can be interpreted as over-concerned, trivial, indifferent, over-dramatic, buttering-up, overly friendly, official, expert-like, parental or authoritarian.

2. The counsellor should be able to recognize the reasons for seeking help. Clients often are unable to say clearly why they are seeking help or they may give safe or weak reasons for wanting help. Thus, it is up to the counsellor to take the lead in exploring and identifying the reason or reasons why counselling is being requested. To overlook this step may lead to much fumbling about in the dark and false starts in this interview as well as in later sessions.

It is best to stay away from a "problem" focus. Actually, people don't have "problems". What they do have are concerns, difficulties, situations, relationships, and conditions under which they live. People are always responding in varying degrees of effectiveness to these life conditions.

By clarifying what the factors in one's life are which need attention and improvement, counselling may provide a basis for discussion and learning how to improve one's performance and life conditions.

Rather than locate "the problem", an initial task of the counsellor is to aid the client to recognize what changes are desired - and to aid him/her to realize that behaviour can be improved and conditions can be changed and that he/she can (must) have an important part to play in this process of improvement and change. Then, move on toward decisions or behaviour change.

3. The counsellor should be able to establish whether or not help has already been sought. If so, where and when and for what reasons? A client usually comes to counselling with pre-set notions about counselling. If a previous experience has been helpful, then the individual's orientation will be positive - or dependent! Often a person seeks help as a result of talking to a friend or acts upon hearsay about counselling. An effective counsellor tries to determine if the client has had (or is having) help on the issue at hand from any source: a minister, teacher, counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, friend, relative, neighbour, etc. This knowledge can help straighten out what is expected from counselling and avoid confusion, contradictory advice and interference with other counselling.

4. The counsellor should be able to recognize the client's expectations. There are several reasons for finding out what the client expects from the counselling situation. First, a client may have completely unrealistic expectations which can never be met through counselling. Second, if a counsellor fails to clarify why the client has come for counselling, the result may be a long and frustrating tangent. Some people want very specific help in getting a job or information about how to go to school. Others want specific help but are simultaneously dealing with personal distress - marriage, child-rearing, loneliness, death in the family, etc. Others are not able to say very clearly just what they wish help with beyond that they are dissatisfied or

uneasy or upset. But even knowing that a client is not able to state clearly what is expected or what is the matter is a start! Knowing the client's expectations are even more crucial in an employment setting in which many personal concerns cannot be met.

5. The counsellor should be able to provide a clear definition of what kind of counselling can be expected. Some time during the first contact, the counsellor should focus directly upon what the client expects and explain what kind of counselling can be given in this particular situation. Sometimes there is a big gap between what the client expects and what the counsellor is willing or able to give. If this is so, then the earlier this discrepancy is known, the better off both will be. Some guidelines for the counsellor in defining what he/she is able to give are:

(a) Don't beat around the bush.

(b) Don't make promises that can't be delivered.

(c) Don't suggest something which you have only read about but with which you do not have direct, practical experience.

(d) Say what you can do and will do, as a counsellor.

(e) Say what you expect of the client.

(f) State counselling goals in language which is appropriate to the client.

(g) Explain that counselling often means (mental) work and is more than idle conversation or cheap advice.

(h) Check-out with the client to find out if what you are offering is what he/she is seeking.

Establishing a definition of what is meant by employment counselling makes it possible to focus and evaluate the counselling process by saying (at a later time) "This concern is very different from what we agreed we are trying to accomplish here". This definition may have to be reviewed from time to time in subsequent interviews.

6. A counsellor should be able to explore and search for meaningful counselling content and issues. This is one of the most important functions of counselling, especially the initial counselling contact. While the client is the ultimate "authority" on what is important, the counsellor has a responsibility to encourage active exploration of the question, "What should we focus on?" There are no formulas for this, but frequent areas needing exploration include:

(a) work obligations and situations,

(b) areas of interpersonal stress and conflict,

(c) checking out physical symptoms - eating, sleeping, exercise, etc.,

(d) finding out who is especially significant in the client's world right now,

(e) exploring the client's use of time and organization of life activities,

(f) exploring emotional ups and downs,

(g) exploring personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

With some clients, there is very little need to search for meaningful content since the client will already have clearly defined needs and expectations.

7. A counsellor should be able to estimate the client's ability to cope and change. Counselling can be quite frustrating especially to the counsellor who fails to realistically perceive a client's potential for change. If a client does not seem to profit from counselling, there may be several explanations, not the least of which may be a limited capacity to cope or to change. Counselling is a process aimed at improving how a person thinks, feels and acts about his/her life concern. Improvement in how one thinks and/or feels about important issues in life paves the way for more productive and rewarding behaviour. In trying to determine a client's potential for change, one must try

to keep in mind not only behaviour but also the individual's ability to think and his/her ability to identify and manage emotions. A counsellor need not feel badly about failing to do the impossible.

8. A counsellor should be able to recognize feelings. In almost all counselling contacts, feelings play an important part. Reducing negative emotions and their causes as well as promoting positive feelings is a necessary part of the counselling process. It is quite common to find that in an initial contact, the client is aware of feeling strongly, but doesn't know how to use or manage feelings effectively. It can be crucial to subsequent counselling contacts that some sorting-out of feelings and correct identification of significant feelings be facilitated by the counsellor. A feeling is both emotional and meaningful. Feelings are not ideas although ideas can cause feelings and feelings do have a meaning. Clearing up distortion in feelings is often a necessary prelude to successful thinking and behaving. A counsellor who is able to recognize, accept and clarify the client's feelings in an initial contact has taken an important first step which promotes successful counselling in the ensuing contacts.

9. A counsellor should be able to establish counselling structure. Counselling, whether one contact or many, requires structure. In the very first contact a client must be encouraged to use the counselling time in a purposeful

way. This provides a certain structure to the counselling session and promotes the idea of priorities, plans, and change. Encouraging the client to use self-help tactics also suggests a self-reliant goal and promotes a learning structure organized around the client's own capacity and personal resources. From the beginning, counselling structure should be directed toward self-reliance rather than toward dependency.

10. A counsellor should be able to get a commitment to counselling. If counselling is a one-time contact, then obtaining a commitment is not an issue. However, when the client requests help in decision-making, or desires to change work-related behaviours, more than one counselling session will be called for, and obtaining a commitment to counselling is essential. With some clients it is only necessary to arrive at a simple verbal agreement to return. A short written "contract" specifying what both counsellor and client will do before the next counselling session and specifying an agreement to meet for a set number of times may be necessary, especially for clients who have a reputation of failure to follow through on commitments. One thing is certain: the client who remains uncommitted is not likely to return for further counselling. If he/she should return, the chances that counselling will flounder or remain unproductive are great. If a client does not have a sincere commitment to counselling and appears unwilling to develop a commitment, it is better to find this out sooner rather than later.

11. A counsellor should be able to prescribe learning-oriented home-work. A client should leave the counselling session with firm ideas about what he/she can do (and has agreed to do) to improve his/her situation before returning to the next counselling session. For example, a prospective trainee may agree to study the training brochure before returning, or a job applicant may agree to go for a specific job interview. Or a person may agree to keep a personal journal and make entries about a conflict situation which he/she is currently experiencing. It is important to elicit "homework" assignments from the client rather than resorting to imposition by the counsellor. In a sense, the real test of counselling effectiveness is what the client does outside of the counselling session to improve his/her situation. The client is responsible for his/her own behaviour and change. Learning to take charge of his/her own actions and direction in life often begins in the first meeting with the assumption of learning-oriented homework responsibilities.

12. A counsellor should be able to close the counselling session. A counselling contact should, if at all possible, close on a friendly but business-like note. "I believe that we've gotten a good start today and I'll look for you next Tuesday at 2:30", is an example of a closing remark. Some counsellors feel compelled to go into a lengthy review of what has happened in the session. This is usually not only unnecessary but often boring and detrimental. A brief mutual check-out on progress, goals and agreements is a more appropriate method of closing the counselling interview.

13. A counsellor should be able to evaluate counselling performance. It is important for counsellors, even highly trained and experienced counsellors to continuously evaluate their own counselling performance. There are three possible sources of evaluation data: self-evaluation, evaluation by peers/supervisors and evaluation data from the client. Evaluation can be carried out by direct observation (seldom feasible), by listening to audio-tapes or by studying interview notes. Evaluation can also be done on actual counselling interviews or by means of role-played interviews in training sessions.

Each guideline will re-appear in greater detail as you study and begin to apply the Systematic Employment Counselling system.

EXERCISE III

1. Defining counselling as an "educative" activity whereby clients are helped to reach learning objectives clearly separates counselling from the medical model. Reflect on this and decide what difference this makes in each of the following areas:

(a) Assumptions about client problems

(b) Role of counsellor

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(c) Responsibility of client

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(d) Effect of clients' environment

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(e) Counselling accountability

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(f) Counselling structure

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Systematic Employment Counselling

As an employment counsellor, you face a multitude of tasks to which you must respond with speed and accuracy. The needs of those seeking employment and those seeking to upgrade their employability have resulted in increased dependence of many individuals upon the expertise of the employment counsellor. It would not be difficult at all to convince you that the tasks and demands of employment counselling have become too great to allow intuition and common sense to be your only tools. Yet one of the major voids within the domain of employment counselling has been the absence of a comprehensive, detailed model that provides you, as an employment counsellor, with a practical approach for the entire counselling process.

In Module 1, Assessment Interview, you were introduced for the first time to a counselling system for employment counselling. A counselling system was defined as an orderly whole that specifies the relationship of each part to the whole and the parts to each other. This definition refers to the many functions that a counsellor is expected to perform. All are part of a greater whole. All bear some relationship to each other. The system specifies what this whole is, what the parts are, and how the parts are related. In counselling practice, this system is a mental map or blueprint that a counsellor considers while working with a client. Because the counsellor has the system firmly in mind, he/she can quickly retrieve specific information concerning sub-parts of the system and use them to give direction to the counselling effort. Use of the system ensures that a counsellor will attend to all sub-parts, yet move through the system toward a successful conclusion of the counselling effort.

Let us refresh our memories by taking another look at the overall Systematic Employment Counselling model.

Figure 1 presents a basic overview of the 9 stages that are to be undertaken with each client. The stages are to be done in the sequence presented, although we may need to vary this in some special situations, as we will learn later. You will note that Building upon Relationship/Commitment and Referral to Another Agency appear in the centre of the system. This is because the relationship dimension is critical at many stages and referral may become a viable and necessary step at numerous stages. The other stages, in most cases, tend to proceed sequentially.

Figure 1 is not intended to represent a complete system for employment counselling. It only represents the stages of the counselling process. A complete system would indicate all of the activities that are undertaken within each stage, how they relate to each other, and how they related to the entire system. For the purposes of this chapter, we are interested in obtaining only a general understanding of this flow that we call the counselling process. Here are some specific comments about the various stages that are helpful to keep in mind.

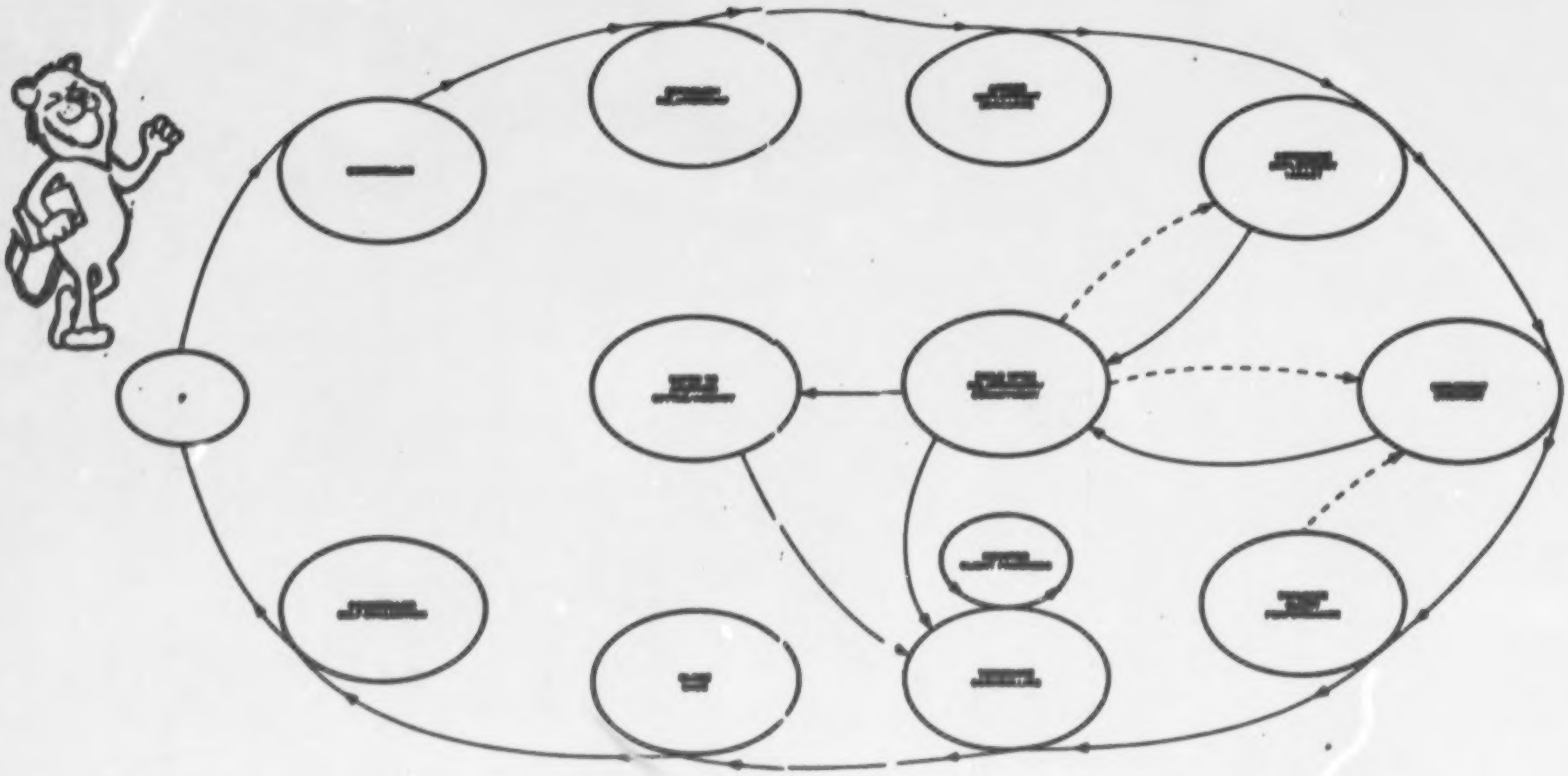

Figure 1: Overview of Systematic Employment Counselling

Counsellor. In Systematic Counselling, as in other approaches, we start with the knowledge and skills of the counsellor. The counsellor is not only one with competencies but also one who possesses fundamental attitudes and ethical beliefs which are essential in counselling. Any system is only as good as the individual who controls it. The more one works with a system, the more effective one should become. Therefore, while the system begins and ends with the counsellor, the counsellor is not a constant. It is to be hoped that as work begins with each new client, the counsellor has learned from his/her previous experience and proceeds through the system each time in a slightly more effective way.

Establish Counselling Relationship. The counsellor-client relationship is the foundation of the Systematic Employment Counselling model. It is the first vital step in the system. You spent considerable time learning about the relationship dimensions of counselling in the Assessment module. These same dimensions apply throughout the entire system. Notice in Figure 1.0, the link between Determine Employment Target which is the beginning of this module, and Build Upon Relationship/Commitment which is at the centre of the system. This module will focus on targets and strategies and techniques to be used in counselling to assist clients to achieve their goals and targets but the counsellor-client relationship is the important on-going component.

There has been considerable controversy regarding the need to structure and define the counselling relationship explicitly. Some say that the relationship develops better and more naturally if structure remains implicit and is not provided by the counsellor at the outset (Rogers, 1951). Others say that counsellors should structure explicitly. According to Loughary (1961), two purposes for explicit structuring by the counsellor are (a) to help the client gain realistic expectations about the counsellor and counselling and (b) to give the client some idea of what is involved in counselling methods and purposes. One of the underlying assumptions in this self-study manual and the Assessment manual is that explicit structure should be provided to all new clients, since it is their right to know what can be expected from counselling as practiced by their employment counsellors.

Assess Employment Concerns: Clients frequently confuse us because they don't explain exactly why they are seeing us. In textbooks clients sometimes say, "I've come to see you because I'm just so miserable in my present job situation and I want help in changing jobs" or "I'm hoping that you can give me some direction so that I can choose a meaningful field for me". In practice, clients are much more apt to say, "Things are OK, I guess, but I don't really know" or "I just don't think I'm where I should be" or "I just can't seem to find the right job". Remember all those case studies you did in Module 1? Sound familiar!

Much time was spent in Module 1 on determining your client's reason(s) for seeking employment counselling. At the termination of an effective assessment interview, it was stressed that both you and your client should have achieved:

1. a mutual understanding of your client's employment concerns,

2. client movement toward perceiving his/her employment difficulties as a contingency situation, that is, "If I am to resolve X, then I must learn/do/achieve/work on y + z."

3. an indication from the client of his/her willingness and commitment to work concretely on the identified goals.

Knowledge of the concern and why it continues to exist, its effect upon a client's employment needs, and client commitment are all part of the assessment process.

Determine Employment Target. Thus far, the counselling process has been concerned with learning about your client, his/her concerns, his/her environment and what he/she needs to learn for successful employment. Now the emphasis shifts to creating the conditions and opportunities to learn that which is needed.

The establishment of general goals and specific employment targets is a vital stage within the Systematic Employment Counselling process. Motivational research indicates that establishing goals/targets is of benefit to a client regardless of the counselling setting. For example, they serve to direct a client's thoughts and work towards a given end; they motivate (particularly when explicitly stated and realistically attainable) and they serve as rewards (as a target is approached, effort is increased). Employment counsellors derive benefits from working with specific targets. Targets provide feedback, they result in better caseload management and they make it easier to operate within the employment mandate.

For our purposes, determining employment targets may be construed as a three-step process. First, the employment counsellor helps the client to view his/her concern in terms of a desirable goal that might be reached through counselling. Next the employment counsellor and the client generate an employment target that is specific, observable, measurable, and involves standards as well as conditions. Finally, the employment counsellor and the client work on the development of a series of action steps that must be taken in order to maximize the attainment of the specific targets. This activity results in client commitment in a form of a verbal or written contract.

Implement Strategy. By the time of the verbal or written contract, the counsellor and the client both have agreed upon the employment target that will be reached before counselling is concluded. At this moment it may seem that a great distance exists between the client's present and desired behaviours. The counsellor's next task is to introduce the process that will bridge this gap. The process for effecting this change is called a strategy and is a comprehensive plan.

In the present self-study manual, three major strategies and systematic steps for implementing these strategies will be taught. The strategies chosen have been selected with attention to those client employment difficulties which are most frequently presented to employment counsellors as well as those difficulties employment counsellors can be expected to work with most effectively.

The first major strategy is Decision-Making. This has been selected as, for many clients, the process of finding and selecting employment is a process of decision-making, discovering alternatives, weighing advantages and disadvantages, determining costs and benefits and choosing an alternative which provides the most benefit at the least cost. For many clients requiring employment counselling, difficulties stem from not being able to choose among the options available or perceiving themselves as having limited if any options.

The second major strategy is a Learning Strategy focused on acquiring minimum competencies for employment. This strategy presumes that many clients face employment difficulties because of learning deficits within their own backgrounds in one or a combination of the following areas:

- learning to assess and use information to one's advantage,
- learning skills directly related to finding and keeping employment,

- learning productive work-related habits such as the ability to get to work on time and to persist at a task until it is completed,
- learning increased motivation necessary to find and maintain employment.

The third major strategy is again primarily a learning strategy focused on teaching clients to help themselves and is called a "Self-Management Strategy". It is a special application of the strategies already discussed to prepare clients to become more self-directed, to do those things which are goal-directed and to eliminate or reduce habitual behaviours which may be immediately rewarding but are in the long run self-defeating in terms of employment.

This text will focus strongly on strategies for change. Simply stated, now that we know the concerns (assessment), what do we do about them (action strategies)?

Evaluate Client Performance through to Counsellor Self-Evaluation following the completion of the strategy and the related steps, the counsellor and the client are ready to begin the formal evaluation process. There are two main reasons why counselling should be evaluated: (a) to determine and encourage continued client progress and (b) to improve the counsellor's effectiveness in dealing with future clients, or in further counselling activities with the present client.

The intent of Systematic Employment Counselling is to help the client move towards a mutually-agreed upon counselling goal. On the way to the achievement of that goal, it may be necessary to accomplish a number of smaller, more specific employment targets. Although the specific counselling strategy and the accompanying steps have been completed and verified by the time this stage of the employment counselling process has been reached, we cannot automatically assume that all employment targets have been achieved. A systematic review of the client's performance must be conducted, including an analysis of outcomes, a decision as to whether the employment targets have been attained and a decision concerning the need for additional counselling. Only after the decision is made that no further counselling is necessary is it appropriate to terminate the counselling process.

While the intent of counselling is to change client behaviour, it is also necessary that the behaviour of the counsellor be examined. The counsellor's behaviour is one of the main instruments through which client behaviour is changed. The counsellor must ask questions such as: Did I help the client to attain the stated employment target? Did I help the client achieve the employment target as efficiently as possible? What have I learned from working with this client that will help me serve future clients more effectively? It is this kind of feedback that makes the Systematic Employment Counselling system a "closed-loop" model, that is, what is learned about the counselling process is fed back to the counsellor as a self-correcting measure to improve counselling with other clients.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using a Counselling System

In Module 1, some of the advantages and disadvantages of using a counselling system were briefly outlined. Before we take a look at the employment counselling system in more complete form, let us further examine the pros and cons of using counselling systems. As you read the ideas presented here, think about added advantages and disadvantages that occur to you. These can then be discussed in the workshop. Some of the principal advantages are:

1. Conciseness. Counsellor effort is made more efficient because a system helps the counsellor to eliminate ineffective patterns of counselling. Once you have learned a system well, you will have confidence in what you are doing and will be able to do it in less time.

2. Preciseness. Because a system has been learned, one would expect the counsellor to be more precise in going about the task of counselling. This does not mean that one's creativity must be curbed or that one is only allowed a limited range of responses. Quite the reverse. When a counsellor has mastered a system, he/she knows exactly what is to be done generally and is then freed to be creative in working through the counselling process in a way that meets the specific needs of each client.

3. Accountability. A system is designed to meet certain ends and, if the system is designed well, it will greatly improve the quality of service provided by counsellors. We all are accountable for the work that we do. The orderly,

thorough approach that a system helps each counsellor to follow is directly related to the degree or frequency of success that each counsellor can report.

4. Planfulness. A comprehensive system provides a counsellor with a knowledge of the relatedness of various parts of the counselling process. Each event is not viewed in isolation, but rather as a meaningful part of the whole. Understanding the interrelatedness of parts greatly helps a counsellor to function effectively. Also, a system is designed to meet certain ends. A system for helping wayward children, for example, would vary from a system designed to assist the adjustment of family members of the terminally ill. A system designed to assist individuals to resolve employment difficulties is particular to the employment setting.

5. Error reduction. When we counsel without a system, we may well commit errors of omission, if not commission. Knowing a system well will greatly reduce the likelihood that we will forget to cover some aspect of the counselling process or fail to attend to a critical factor needed in helping a client. These might be termed errors of ommission. However, setting goals for clients rather than assisting a client to set his/her own goals represents an error of commission. Learning the principles that undergird a system and practicing their application will reduce the second type of error.

Have you heard of TANSTAAFL? The principle of TANSTAAFL applies to learning a counselling system, or learning any new and complex way of behaving for that matter. TANSTAAFL is an acronym for "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch". Nothing worthwhile in life is free. We pay a price for what we learn. Hopefully, the results of the learning experience are worth the price paid. These "prices" might be considered to be disadvantages. Let's examine a few.

1. Time and effort. Nothing can be learned well without an expenditure of effort -- and that takes time as well. It also takes a degree of personal risk. What if we fail to learn as rapidly as others? What if we expose ourselves as lacking in basic interactional skills? We all have such questions when we embark on a new endeavor. Our personal commitment and motivation is tested because of these understandable self-doubts.

2. Intimidation. Attempting to learn a counselling system, like undertaking any complex task, can be pretty intimidating. We see the complexity and sometimes forget that we are only expected to learn one step at a time. Sorting out the trees from the forest is always a helpful approach in handling complex situations. As we learn the first steps, the later ones seem less formidable. Our attempt, in presenting this system, is to allow you to see the overview of the system without being intimidated by the intricacies of its operation. In time, the finer details will become important. Not now!

3. Discipline. The orderly, planful nature of a counselling system may bring out the rebel within us. "Why should I conform to a system when I could be expressing myself freely?" one might ask. A successful practitioner of any discipline must follow the tenants of the field and these are sometimes rather confining. Attorneys, for example, must meet a variety of expectations placed upon them by ethics of the profession, rules of practice, and fixed expectations as to outcome. As any practitioner begins training, the discipline of the field seems much more confining than it does after one is experienced and feels comfortable in working within the field. Much the same feeling of confinement is to be expected by those who learn a system for counselling. We become conscious of personal limitations and initially fail to realize the potential for creativity and self-expression.

4. Accountability. You probably have already sensed that if a system is designed to produce accountable results, your personal results may be more accurately assessed by your superiors than is the case when no system is employed. You know what is expected of you, but so do they! Most of us aren't in a field "just to put in time and get by". We are in the field of counselling because we sincerely want to help people achieve their personal goals as completely as they can. We also don't mind being held accountable because we want to know how successful we've been and how we can improve our work with future clients. A systematic approach to counselling helps us to do this.

Perhaps as you read future chapters and become more familiar with the counselling system, you will be able to report added advantages and disadvantages. TANSTAAFL applies to this situation as well as to most others. If we want to gain something, we have to accept the conditions which cause us to feel threatened and confined.

EXERCISE IV

1. In order to see whether or not we can identify the five primary stages of the counselling system (ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIP, ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS, DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET, IMPLEMENT STRATEGY, EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE) which have been presented, read the three brief cases that follow and record your responses on the accompanying chart.

   (a) Jack went to the employment centre because he was thoroughly dissatisfied with his work and felt pretty confused. Mrs. L. made Jack feel comfortable and learned in detail about Jack's dissatisfaction. Each week she learned more. After five weeks, Jack felt pretty "talked out". Mrs. L. tried to reassure him that she was interested in him and urged him to continue. Jack talked on for the remainder of his interview, but didn't go back again because he sensed he was making no progress.

(b) Nellie went to Mr. O. because her children were now all in school and she was unsure in which occupational area she was likely to get a job. Mr. O. quickly helped her to see that plenty of jobs were available for waitresses. He called Emile's Cafe, found they still needed two waitresses, and sent her over for an interview. Three weeks later, he discovered she had left Emile's and considered some changes he might make in his approach to working with people like Nellie.

(c) Mrs. F. helped Mike to feel comfortable and to explore his feelings of extreme pressure within his present job. She also considered the impact of his recent marriage to a woman with three children and the effect of this new home environment upon his work situation. She gave Mike several booklets that looked very interesting to him and dealt with job stress. Also, she gave him a "daily stress checklist" that he might use to relieve his tension. At the end of their third interview, Mrs. F. helped Mike to see how he could use the stress-reduction skills in other situations and, after he left, evaluated her own performance in working with Mike so that she could assist "future Mikes" more effectively.

Directions: Place a + for each phase covered by the counsellor and a 0 for each phase which the counsellor omitted.

	Establish Relationship	Assess Concerns	Determine Employment Target	Implement Strategy	Evaluate Client Performance
Mrs. L.					
Mr. O.					
Mrs. F.					

Summary

The work of an employment counsellor is both exciting and challenging. Employment counselling is exciting because it provides one with the opportunity to have a career which is focused on helping others to learn. It is emotionally and intellectually stimulating to assist a client to find a job, to make a decision, to locate valid information, to eliminate undesirable behaviours, or to resolve any of those thousand-and-one concerns that will hinder a client from leading a more satisfying life.

One of the major thrusts of employment counselling is to help clients to attain those personal employment-related goals which will result in positive changes in their lives. However, any one who helps individuals to attain goals recognizes that the task is complex. He/she is fully aware that it is demanding work that requires a high degree of control over one's own behaviour, an extensive knowledge of human behaviour including the behaviour of people in crisis situations like sudden unemployment, a sensitivity to human beings and their concerns and a large repertoire of technical skills. He/she also understands that the complexities of human behaviour and the counselling process require the use of an effective counselling system to organize and guide one's behaviour while counselling.

A counselling system can be thought of as a mental map that enables a counsellor to conceptualize the whole and then see the various stages through which counselling passes as it moves from its beginning to its conclusion. With training and practice, a counsellor learns to assist each client in moving through these stages efficiently and effectively. With this basic understanding of the system's purpose, we are now ready to learn specific skills in the chapters that follow. As these skills are individually learned, they can be incorporated within the overarching system in order to provide a comprehensive guide for counselling practice.

Chapter 2

Employment Targets

Overview

The establishing of goals and obtaining client commitment to work towards goal achievement were dealt with comprehensively in the Assessment module. Prior to goal setting, the counselling focus was on learning about the concerns of the client by working through complaint and constraint statements and assisting the client to move forward to perceiving the resolution to his/her employment difficulties as a contingency situation - i.e. "If I am to resolve x, then I must learn to achieve/work on y & z". With the movement towards goal setting, the emphasis shifts from the past and present behaviour of the client to the future behaviour or responses that the client would like to and needs to learn as a result of employment counselling.

This chapter includes both a review and additional exercises on goal setting in employment counselling. This is necessary because, in Systematic Employment Counselling, the formulation of goals and subsequent employment targets are the foundations upon which all other stages in the counselling process are built. The strategies to be selected and/or combined to assist clients are tailored specifically to the defined goals and employment targets. In order to evaluate and monitor the client's progress, and indeed your own progress, the degree to which goals and targets are achieved is your major point of reference.

Following a review of goal setting, the chapter has two main sections. The first section presents the process through which goals are converted into employment targets. This refinement is necessary for many types of goals and types of clients. The final section provides you with information on how to formulate contracts for change to be achieved through counselling and presents additional steps to ensure the client's continued commitment.

Objectives

This chapter is designed to provide you with the knowledge and skills for establishing targets in employment counselling. Upon successful completion of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Given a case study, explain how you would help a client become refocused and recommitted to goal achievement.

2. Identify the 5 systematic steps required to move from general counselling goals through to strategy selection.

3. Given a list of client concerns expressed in contingency statements, generate appropriate employment counselling goals.

4. Differentiate between a goal and an employment target.

5. Given a list of employment targets, determine whether the three basic characteristics of employment targets have been met.

6. Given a number of case studies, generate appropriate counselling goals and employment targets.

7. Given a case study, decide whether you would handle the case and provide justification for so doing.

8. Using an employment counselling contract form, complete in writing the appropriate sections covering goals and employment targets.

9. Given a case study, determine how well each step of the Determine Employment Target stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling has been covered.

Steps within Determine Employment Targets

Just as the Systematic Employment Counselling model provides a general blueprint to guide you through the counselling process, each stage within the system contains its own specific blueprint of steps to guide you through completion of that stage. While the steps may appear initially to be mechanical and somewhat sterile, each step is designed to answer questions which are crucial for productive counselling movement. Let us look at the questions which the Determine Employment Target stage of Systematic Employment Counselling addresses:

1. Did I help my client to state a goal for his/her counselling experience? If my client already stated a goal during the assessment component, did I help him/her to recall, clarify and confirm commitment to achievement of that goal?

2. Did I help my client translate his/her goal into an employment target that is realistic and achievable within the context of employment counselling?

3. Limited by my competencies, did I assess my ability to help my client achieve his/her employment target? If I judged myself not the best individual to provide assistance, did I take an appropriate course of action such as referral to another person or agency?

4. Does my client understand what I am going to do to help him/her attain the employment target? Have I given my client a verbal commitment to help him/her?

5. Does my client understand what he/she is going to do to work towards achievement of the employment target? Has my client given a verbal commitment to work towards this target?

6. Is the quality of our counselling relationship such that we are working well together? If reluctance is present, have I followed an appropriate course of action?

7. Have I formalized our mutual agreement on the target to be achieved through a contract?

8. Have I paused to mentally recall that all steps of this stage have been covered? If all steps have not been covered, have I returned to those steps needing attention?

Being able to answer the above questions affirmatively gives strong evidence that you and your client have moved very far from the client's initial statement of concern to a positive and committed intent to change in specific areas which are presenting difficulty.

Figure 2 graphically represents the sequence of steps covered by the 8 questions provided above and included within the DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling model.

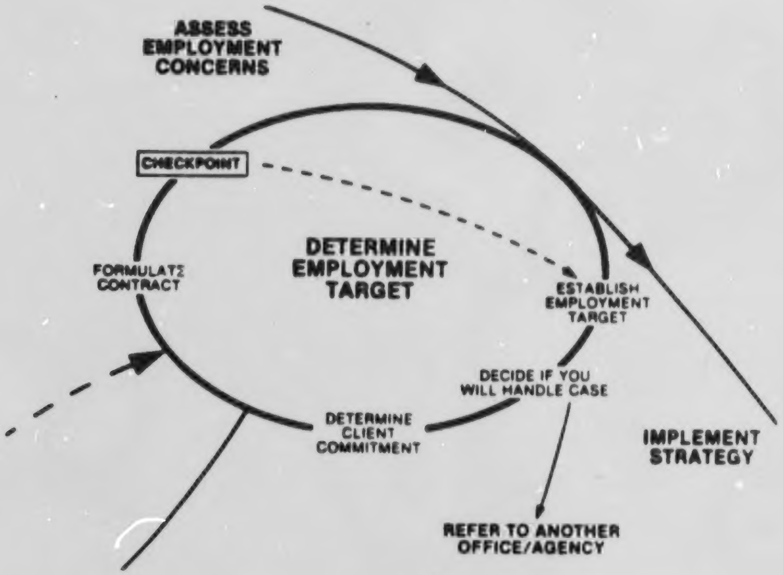
ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
CHECKPOINT
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
FORMULATE CONTRACT
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
DECIDE IF YOU WILL HANDLE CASE
DETERMINE CLIENT COMMITMENT
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

Figure 2 Sequence of steps in Determine Employment Target

Visualizing and sequencing the steps is of course the easy part and tells us nothing of how to move with the client from one step to the next. Let us now look at each step in detail with emphasis on the "how".

Delineate Counselling Goal

You will recall from Module 1 that the last step within Assess Employment Concerns involves the delineation of the counselling goal. This is important to remember as a major premise of Systematic Employment Counselling is that unless specific goals are established early in counselling and unless client commitment to these goals is obtained, no further real progress is possible. Therefore the success of the employment target stage is dependent on the quality of the work already done to establish a goal which belongs to the client, to which the client feels committed and which the client believes is attainable. When the assessment component and the intervention components of counselling are handled by the same counsellor, the flow from the goal to the target stage is smooth and uninterrupted. If done by a different counsellor or if time has elapsed between interviews, it is necessary to return to the goal stage to ensure that the client is still prepared to move ahead in this goal direction. Often goals can be like New Year's Resolutions. We feel totally committed to them on December 31, certain we will succeed on January 1 but by January 8, we may wonder why we made them, if indeed we remember them at all. Similarly clients, between interviews, may waver and be less certain.

Let us review briefly, from the Assessment module, how the establishing of goals contributes to productive counselling:

1. Goals provide direction. When stated in specific terms, a goal helps a client to direct his/her thoughts and work toward a given end. Setting a goal involves more than stating where a client is headed; it involves specifying where a client hopes to be when finished. Whether his/her goal is "passing an employment test" or "writing a good resumé", energies are being set in motion toward reaching a specified end. Given a specific goal, a counsellor and client can begin to plan activities which will move both in the stated direction. When a client says "I don't like what I am doing", he/she is voicing a need for change, but the direction of the desired change is vague. Planning for change on this basis alone would be very difficult.

2. Goals are reasonable estimates. While goals form the cornerstone of effective Systematic Employment Counselling, goals are not fixed facts which, once stated, become unalterable. The shortest distance between two points may always be a straight line but this conviction is not very useful if a mountain stands in the way. Diversions and revisions may therefore be necessary but in each case, the counsellor and client are basing the revision on the best estimate they can collectively make on the type and extent of change required and the client and counsellor's capacity to achieve the desired changes. The counselling effort remains goal directed and goal specific.

3. Goals are motivators and their attainment rewarding. Goals are most motivating when they are explicitly stated and are readily attainable. Vague goals usually fail to spark a client's enthusiasm. A client would likely be motivated to "learn six essential job specific social skills," but might feel uninspired and/or unaware of how to "get along better with fellow employees." Likewise immediate or short-term goals tend to motivate while remote or long-term goals may be left undone. "Preparing for a job interview this morning" and "calling up several potential employers today" are immediate, attainable goals. Longer term goals such as "looking into training possibilities" or "selecting a career area sometime this year" can too easily be put off and even forgotten, whereas competing goals such as "earning $10 for Saturday night" command attention.

4. The closer the goal, the greater the effort. Experimental studies have shown that, as a goal is approached, effort is increased (Gordon, 1963). When a goal is nearing completion it is very difficult to distract the client from

reaching the goal. The closer the goal, the greater its pulling power. Concrete rewards such as actually getting the job represent an obvious reason for desiring completion, but goal attainment provides intrinsic rewards as well. The knowledge that "I did it," "I can do it," or "that task is finally over" is rewarding in itself. Further, if goal attainment has been a pleasant experience, the reward of completion makes us want to move on and set higher standards or attempt to reach new goals. Because we all like to experience success, the knowledge that we have set a goal and reached it is rewarding.

5. Goals provide a measure of counselling progress. Goals provide an objective measure of the success of the counselling intervention. An understanding of where a client is now and where he/she wants to be strengthens counselling in two ways. First, it forces the counselling intervention to be tailored to the specific needs of the client. Second, it permits the counsellor and client to monitor progress towards the goal and compare progress before and after a counselling intervention.

6. Goals result in better caseload management. Assuming that client goals have been explicitly stated and are readily attainable, employment counsellors are then in a position to determine which kinds of clients show the most progress in moving toward greater employability. Also, those employment counsellors possessing a particular talent in working with clients having specific barriers to employment can be assigned those particular cases. This will, of course, be beneficial not only to the employment counsellor but also to the client.

The importance of goal statement and delineation cannot be over emphasized. Assuming that following the Assessment interview your client remains committed to his/her goal and that this goal is realistic and attainable, you would proceed immediately to the first counselling step included within the subsystem DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGETS. There is clearly no need to re-invent the wheel by repeating work which has already been done well.

Let's look at the following example:

Counsellor: As I recall the end of our last interview Jim, we had agreed that before facing another job interview, you need to learn job interview skills. You felt you were ready to learn these skills and to spend some time practicing both here and on your own. Our thinking was that this would boost your confidence and that this would be a good starting point. You've had a few days to think about that. Does it still seem like the right goal to work on?

Client: Yes, it really does. I've flubbed so many job interviews in the past couple of months that I've started to avoid them altogether. I started to feel that I just don't have what it takes. I never thought about it as something I could learn to do. I thought you just went in and tried to be yourself and that was it. I'm ready to learn how to do it better.

Counsellor: That's great. Let's begin right away by looking at the kinds of skills we need to learn and we'll break them down one by one so we don't try to learn everything at once.

In this example, the client's goal is clear and realistic and equally important, the client is still committed to achieving the goal. The counsellor would move immediately into breaking the goal into smaller achievable units (targets) by specifying the skills to be learned and proceed quickly to the planning of action steps to achieve them.

Let's look however at the following example:

Counsellor: As I recall the end of our last interview Jim, we had agreed that before facing another job interview, you need to learn job interview skills. You felt you were ready to learn these skills and to spend some time practicing both here and on your own. Our thinking was that this would boost your confidence and that this would be a good starting point. You've had a few days to think about that. Does it still seem like the right goal to work on?

Client: Oh sure, it still seems right but you know I was talking to a friend of mine who got a job in construction and he told me they didn't even interview him. Just kind of looked him over and said, "Get started. We'll see in a week if you're hired full-time". That's what I really want. Can you refer me to some jobs where I don't have to be interviewed?

Counsellor: OK, so your thinking has changed a little. On the one hand, the goal of learning interview skills still seems right but if we can reach our final goal of getting a good job without the interview hassle, that would be even better.

Client: Exactly. You know I've flubbed so many interviews in the last couple of months that I just don't think I can learn that stuff. It would take me forever and I'd still freeze up and say all the wrong things. I think it would be better for everybody if I just found somebody who'd let me prove I can do it on the job and forget all this first impression garbage.

In this example, Jim has waffled between interviews. He is no longer sure of his goal and no longer convinced he can achieve it. To continue the interview as if the initial goal were still valid would be unproductive. What can you do to assist the client to re-focus on goals? A re-focus is clearly necessary before proceeding. The following steps are suggested:

How do I help my Client Refocus/Become Recommitted to Goal Achievement?

(1) Determine client understanding and/or acceptance of goal.

(2) Help client to extend goal - thinking to dream stage.

(3) Check realism and/or adaptability of the dream.

(4) Convert goal to employment target.

1. Determine client understanding and/or acceptance of goal setting. The first thing you need to know is what occurred between sessions to cause the client to vacillate from his/her previous position. More understanding is needed. As a counsellor, you know that goals are needed for progress to be made but at the same time you know there are many reasons why a client may find goal setting threatening.

Some possibilities which counsellors need to keep in mind are:

- the client does not understand why goals are so important to progress;
- the client has had the concern for so long that he/she cannot think beyond it to the more positive goal-oriented stage;
- the goal was, in some way, not really the client's, but represented more what the counsellor thought the goal should be;
- the client perceives some possibility of punishment if the goal is not attained;
- the work involved in changing is too threatening;
- the situation right now is not bad enough to justify the effort;
- the client wants someone to listen to his/her concerns, but really is not motivated beyond having a listener.

Very frequently, discussion around the above points will reveal the source of difficulty and the client will move forward to re-establishing a desirable goal.

Continuing with our example of Jim, consider the following:

Counsellor: OK, let's back up a few steps. You will remember we discussed earlier how important it was that we establish a goal to guide our work together and that the goal must feel right for you. We discussed that this goal might change and that seems to have happened. This is fine and we'll want to spend some time re-assessing our earlier goal. Maybe it wasn't the right one; maybe your thinking in between sessions has resulted in a much better goal for you; maybe it just seems like too much to learn. We'll discuss all these things. I do however want to be sure that we both understand how important it is to have a goal, even if we have to re-adjust it many times.

Client: Yeah, I understand that. I think you made that clear.

Counsellor: Could you tell me why you think having a goal is important to our work together?

Client: Well, it's like you said. If you don't know what I want and if I don't know what I want, we won't know what we're doing.

Counsellor: And we'll never really know if we've made any progress.

Client: Yeah I understand that.

Counsellor: You mentioned that you had a discussion with a friend and that seems to have changed your thinking. Can you tell me more about that?

In this dialogue the counsellor has ensured that Jim still accepts goal - setting as important and has begun to explore the shift in Jim's thinking.

2. Allow your client to dream. When faced with a change to be made, there is a tendency to think small and stay close to the familiar, thereby reducing risk. The goals we set for ourselves are often too conservative and we wish, at a later time, that we had been more ambitious in pursuing what we really wanted but thought impossible or too frightening. This is particularly true in the area of unemployment where almost any job (even one in which a client has no interest) may reduce insecurity only to later cause dissatisfaction. It would obviously be a disservice to a client to encourage him/her to set sights upon an impossible goal; similarly it can be a disservice not to encourage a client to reach a little. With clients who have been caught up in the concern so long that they cannot see solutions, the technique of DREAMING may be very beneficial and insightful. In all cases, as a counsellor, this technique may provide you with an important window into the client's world which gives you data on what your client would like to do or become.

Numerous leads can be used to let your client "dream a little" about the goal to be reached through counselling. Some suggestions follow:

"Let's take a few minutes, put aside all the hassles and focus on what you would like from our work together. If we could be successful at whatever we tried, what would you like to see changed as a result of our working together".

"We've been discussing your wanting to decide whether a move west is a good idea at this time. Let's put that aside for a minute and try to imagine yourself working four years from today. What would you like to see? What would you like to be able to say?"

"When you think about all that is involved in returning to work after such a long absence, there are many, many factors to be looked at and we will certainly do that. Let's for now take a little distance from all those factors and look at what you want, regardless of whether or not it can be achieved. If I had a magic wand and could grant three wishes about your returning to work, what would these wishes be?"

Or using our example with Jim again:

Counsellor: Sometimes Jim, it's helpful when trying to decide on a goal to do a little future thinking - or dreaming a little, if you will. You've said that you'd like to find a job where you could prove yourself by working and avoid going through the interview process. Let's assume that you did that and the job you have is one you really wanted and like. Try to imagine yourself working but at the same time up in a helicopter looking at yourself working. Can you do that?

Client: Seems a little crazy but I guess I can sort of do it.

Counsellor: OK, take a few moments and try to imagine what you'd like to see - where are you working, what kind of setting are you in; are you with people or alone; what are you actually doing. Say whatever comes to your mind.

Client: This is crazy but sure, I see myself in a spiffy suit making all kinds of money. I'm getting rich quick!

Counsellor: That's not so crazy - I think we'd all like to see that. Are you in an office, working outside, with others, alone?

Client: Actually, I'm not in a spiffy suit. I'm a worker. Yeah I'd be outside, working on repairs, like telephone repairs. My own truck, my own equipment, no boss breathing down my throat every second of the day. But I'd feel good. With that kind of job, you know if you're doing it right. Either the phone works or it doesn't. If it doesn't, you're in trouble - if it does, you're doing your job.

One of the interesting aspects of the dreaming technique is that it can provide necessary goal clarity. The concerns or complaints which a client initially introduces may immediately and correctly suggest an appropriate goal. This is, however, not always the case. For example, Jim's concerns discussed earlier seemed to immediately suggest learning job interview skills. Now his stated concerns suggest finding a job immediately. While this may be both realistic and attainable, the dreaming technique may introduce new data which will permit the counsellor and client to re-assess the goal much more appropriately. It may also permit Jim to begin to see that he may be more motivated to avoid a stressful situation (interviews) for a short-term goal (construction job) rather than learn to cope with a stressful situation for a more satisfying longer-term goal (repair man). This technique may assist Jim to begin to re-focus on what it is he wants and what he is prepared to do to achieve it.

Many clients are not given the opportunity to dream a little out loud so they do it inside. This is of no help to the counsellor. Providing an opportunity to verbalize unspoken dreams during counselling can be most useful.

Another client may have expressed a goal of returning to clerical work so the family has more disposable income. Through the dreaming technique, these three wishes might be expressed:

1. That I could be paid for the kind of volunteer work I did with the Cancer Society that made me feel useful and gave me a sense of purpose.

2. That I could earn enough working part time so I could spend more time with my child who has a learning disability.

3. That I could get some household help so I don't feel guilty about all the things I'll have to neglect.

Wishful thinking is of course wishful thinking and it may be that none of these wishes can be completely realized in the short-term. However, as a counsellor, you are in a position to begin to use the information acquired to direct the counselling goal and subsequent action steps to take into consideration some of the client's inner world.

EXERCISE I

1. Eva is 28 years old and reports that she is bored with her job as a waitress in her uncle's small restaurant. She has worked there for ten years. She is attractive, verbal, and animated. However, she is quick to point out that she has never worked elsewhere and has only a high school education.

   What would be two responses you might use to help her to dream of what she would like to do .... a job she wishes she could have? List them below.

   (a) ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

   (b) ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

2. If Eva reported that anything she really wanted would be beyond her grasp and ridiculous to even consider, list two ways in which you might respond.

(a) ____

____

____

____

(b) ____

____

____

____

3. Check realism and/or adaptability of the dream. Following the process of dreaming used to help your client verbalize his/her wished-for goals, the test of REALISM is introduced. You must now consider with your client how to use the information from dreaming and translate it into a target or counselling outcome that is indeed attainable. It may be, as in the case of Jim, that the wished-for goal is indeed attainable (excepting the "get-rich-quick" idea). In the second example, it may not be possible to meet the conditions of the client's three wishes and at the same time increase the family income to the needed level. Counsellor and client must attempt together to establish an employment

target which meets at least *some* of the criteria of the wishes. One can readily see the increased chances for success when working towards a target which is truly desired and at the same time within reach.

Let's look at two examples:

Counsellor: Let's think about what you've just talked about Jim. If you could have your way, you'd like to have a repair job, one where you could see the results of your work, be fairly independent of constant supervision, be outside a lot of the time and make bundles of money.

Client: The bundles of money was a bit of a joke and I know I can't have that unless I win a lottery.

Counsellor: What about the rest? When you think of yourself working, let's say as a telephone installer, how does it make you feel?

Client: Good, really good. But you have to go through those darned interviews and I just can't do it. I already blew one interview there.

Counsellor: So, let's come back to right now. We have to set a goal, a target we're going to aim for and there are some choices to be made.

We can set as a target to look at jobs right now where you might be able to avoid an interview.

We can set as a target to get a job in repairs and take the chance that learning interview skills just might make the difference between getting it and blowing it - or

We can decide together to look for a job right now without the interview and at the same time set up a plan to develop and learn those missing skills that you can work at on your own.

Maybe it would be useful to look at each target separately and talk about its advantages and disadvantages for you personally. How does that sound as a plan?

Client: Sounds OK.

Notice that the counsellor is doing several things. He/she has introduced reality in the form of three separate targets and at the same time is giving the responsibility to evaluate and decide on the target to the client.

A second example:

Counsellor: So if we were to set a target based on your wishes it would be something like:

"To find a part-time job which makes me feel useful, allows me time with my child and time to keep up the house and at the same time allows us to meet the mortgage payments on the new house."

Client: Yes, that would be the perfect solution but you see, I don't have any real skills. All we did for the Cancer Society was try to make people comfortable, give them juice, coffee, that sort of thing and try to help them smile. Nobody is going to pay me enough just to do that.

Counsellor: It certainly isn't everyone who can help suffering people to smile. That sounds like quite a skill to me.

Client: Well it sure made me feel good doing it, but it doesn't help with the mortgage.

Counsellor: The mortgage seems to be a really major concern. Would it be a good idea to look very realistically at how much you have to earn to meet those payments as a starting point? Then we can look at the other conditions you would like - feeling useful, not working full-time and see if it is possible to meet at least one of those conditions.

Client: Yes that sounds good. I've already figured out some finances. You see we're starting to run short each month... ...

Notice that while reality-testing is being introduced following dreaming, the counsellor is simultaneously re-introducing the importance of goal delineation. The counselling process is being directed toward the next important step which is to convert the goal into an achievable, realistic employment target.

Before proceeding to this next step, see how you do on the following exercise on Reality-Testing.

EXERCISE II

Eva, our unhappy waitress, has been very creative in dreaming about occupational possibilities. She reports that she enjoys working with people and also enjoys the world of business. She wishes she could be a corporate executive who negotiated business transactions each day.

"Corporate executive" is heavy thinking for a person with no corporate experience and no capital. However, we've learned something about Eva's ambition that we didn't know before. Now we need to determine if she can "scale down" this dream to something we both agree is attainable.

Write out two responses you might use to help her in this "scaling down" process.

EXERCISE II (continued)

1. ____

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____

2. ____

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If Eva responds that she was really being forced back into her uncle's restaurant because that was the only real job she has had, what are two ways in which you might respond?

3. ____

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4. ____

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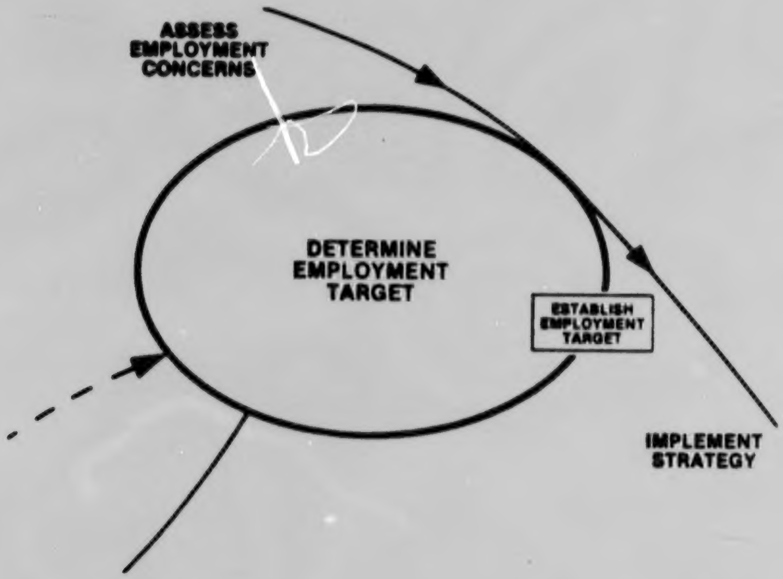
Establish Employment Target


ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY

An employment target is the refinement of a counselling goal to specify the observable and measurable behaviours that a client will be able to perform as a result of participation in the employment counselling process. The advantages of targets are several:

1. They provide a method for breaking learning to be achieved through counselling into small units so a client can begin to experience success quickly.

2. They tailor the selection of counselling strategies according to the specific learning needs of the client.

3. They guide, direct and provide a constant reference point for the success of the employment counselling process.

4. They define precisely what is to be achieved before terminating counselling and thereby allow termination to evolve naturally.

One can immediately see the advantages of targeting with a client such as Jim. He already is doubtful of his capacity to learn appropriate interview behaviours. Part of his reluctance may well be that he doesn't know how much he has to learn and if he has to learn it perfectly. An appropriate beginning target with Jim might be, for example:

"To practice maintaining eye contact and answering questions directly so that at the end of one practice interview with a counsellor, I can demonstrate both skills for five interview minutes".

It will of course not be necessary to be so precise with all clients but the more precise the target, the greater likelihood of client success and of meeting the final goal.

Two cautionary notes require mentioning. Following a productive assessment interview, the client's goal may already be sufficiently precise and require no further detail. For example, a client may state something like the following: "I want to look at training opportunities which might be available. I've wasted enough time in dead-end jobs and I want to decide on a definite course to take in the next month." In this case, the goal is already very precise; it is stated in target terms and there would be no need to proceed further. The "dreaming" technique might be useful in terms of discovering what type of training might be most suitable but it would not be useful in terms of adding any more information on the goal itself.

Similarly some clients may not wish anything more than what was initially stated and, in fact, be somewhat annoyed that you would occupy their time in trying to go beyond their stated ambitions. Let's look at an example for clarification:

Counsellor: What we usually do next in counselling is to try to think of what we would like to achieve through our work together. That is, don't be too concerned about whether or not this is something you could do today, this month, or even this year. Think about what you would like to be doing in the best of all worlds.

Client: Well, I've been in construction work, using my back since I left the army in 1953. That's what I don't want. One of my old army buddies wrote me that he had just joined the Commissionaires and he likes it fine. He says I'm eligible because I'm a vet and he says the salary is great. But I looked up "Commissionaires" in the telephone directory and it wasn't even listed. Don't we have an office in this province even?

Counsellor: Your friend is referring to the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires and they certainly do have a local office. You might well be eligible and that is one possibility, but let's try to get behind that thought a bit and see what is so appealing about it. We may be able to find an even better possibility for you. Just think what is it that you really want the most from a job...what would be that aspect of the job...the perfect job...that would be most appealing?

Client: Hey, I'm not into a soul search. I know what I want and just want to know how to get there. Can you help me or not?

In this instance the counsellor has tried to extend the thinking of the client, but the client has a goal that is probably immediately attainable, realistic and beyond which he doesn't want to go. Counsellor effort should be placed upon helping the client to reach the goal already stated, rather than redirecting client effort toward more precisely defining an employment target.

Although you will find clients such as the one described above on occasion, it is more frequently the case that a goal is stated that needs extending through the dreaming process previously described, then final adjusting into an employment target. What can you do to help your client express his/her concern in terms of an employment target? The following steps are recommended.

How do I help my Client to State an Employment Target?

(1) Determine specifics: behaviour standards, conditions.

(2) Formulate target statement.

(3) Stress importance of client participation in specifying target.

(4) Obtain verification of client acceptance of target statement.

1. Determine Specifics: Behaviour, Standards, Conditions. Employment targets, to be useful, must specify the observable and potentially measurable behaviours that a client will be able to perform as a result of participation in the employment counselling process.

We will begin by looking at several goals and their appropriate employment targets.

GOAL	EMPLOYMENT TARGET
To get a job as a repairman	To practice and learn five job interview skills over the next three weeks so well that I obtain, on my own initiative, three job interviews in the repair field.
To move up in the company	To handle my nervousness so well that I make five or fewer typing errors without any exemptions by the supervisor while taking the straight copy typing test (senior level).
To maintain steady employment	To learn constructive responses to criticism from work supervisors so well that an observer reports that I have made no hostile responses during a two-week period.

Notice that in each of the employment targets referred to above there is:

(a) an identification of the desired behaviour or response;

(b) a specification of the criterion or standards of minimum acceptable performance; and

(c) a description of the important conditions that should exist when the behaviour or response is emitted.

More specifically, in the first example, the client wants to learn the behaviour of using five job interview skills effectively. The standard established for knowing whether or not this behaviour is effective is that it will be done "so well that I will obtain three job interviews in the repair field". The important condition of "on my own initiative" is also specified.

In each of the above examples, the employment target was established because the client and counsellor believed that it represented the best of several possible alternatives for reaching the client's desired goal. Other employment targets might have been suggested to accomplish the same goal. In fact, several possible employment targets might be generated in any given counselling session before the client and counsellor agree upon one. In addition, it is not uncommon to find that more than one employment target may have to be accomplished by a client in order to attain the desired goal. In the latter case, some priority among employment targets will have to be established, for it is generally preferable to work on one employment target at a time.

Let us take a closer look at the 3 basic characteristics of employment targets.

1. Behaviour or Response. Employment targets must identify and describe the behaviours to be performed so that client attainment of the employment targets can be recorded. The behaviours to be performed are specific. It is easy to understand why statements such as "avoiding being fired" or "decreasing procrastination" are of little use in employment counselling. They are too vague to indicate exactly what behaviour will be focused upon.

2. Standards. The standard of performance indicates how well or for how long the behaviour in question is to be performed. Key phrases that are often helpful in stating a standard or criterion are ..."so well that"...and ..."so much that".... For example, how many job interviews should be attempted; for how long must a client be punctual before deciding counselling has been successful; does controlling one's temper mean never again to lose it? It is, of course, an individual matter. The client and counsellor can decide what standard or what level the client should attempt to attain. In one instance it might be decided that "The client will on his/her own initiative arrange for 3 job interviews". In another instance, "The client will arrive on time for 2 interviews pre-arranged by the counsellor" may be more appropriate.

In each case a standard is set which reflects a minimum acceptable level of achievement. When that level is met or exceeded, the client has accomplished what he/she wished to do through counselling.

Some varied forms and illustrations for the statement of standards are:

Standards

Specific time duration	• for at least twenty minutes daily • three times during the coming months
Specific degree	• 5 consecutive times without error • not reprimanded at all during the trial period • complete each task assigned each day for 1 week
Task accomplishment	• until a repair job is found • until the boss approves 3 job reports • until the bills can be paid
Change of personal state	• without crying for 6 work days • without being nervous during 3 consecutive attempts

3. Conditions. Identifying the behaviour and the standard or criterion of acceptable performance are two elements of an employment target. The third concerns the conditions or limits that surround performance of a behaviour. A timid worker may have no difficulty speaking in an empty boardroom but become flustered before a large audience. A mother of two young children re-entering the labour market may be willing to consider only those jobs that do not involve overtime. She may also be willing to consider only work that does not involve extensive full-time study or one that involves little travel or commuting time. An individual who has been used to working independently may request that this be a condition of his/her work while another individual may ask that his/her work be people-oriented.

An employment target, then, takes into account not only the specific behaviour that is to be performed and the degree to which it is to be performed, but also the conditions that will prevail when the behaviour is performed at the conclusion of counselling.

Now that we have discussed the concepts used in developing employment targets, let's return to the three examples discussed previously on page 114. In the space below, each target is divided into its component parts.

Behaviour	**Standard**	**Conditions**
Practice and learn five job interview skills	...so well that I obtain three job interviews	...in the repair field and on my own initiative
Handle my nervousness	...so well that I make five or fewer typing errors on two five-minute timings	...without any exemptions by the supervisor .. while taking the straight copy typing test (senior level)
Learn constructive criticism	...so well that an observer reports that I have made no hostile responses at any time for two consecutive weeks	from work supervisors

Notice that in each example, behaviour is specifically stated, a minimum acceptable standard is established and the conditions or limitations that are placed upon each behaviour are also listed. The first example specifies a minimum acceptable number of interviews in a particular occupational field.

Now, let's look at a second aspect of this standard in each instance. In addition to stating an acceptable level of performance, the element of successful replications (or repeats) is also introduced, that is, a minimum number of times that the standard must be reached is included. In the second example, the typist might perform without nervousness on one five minute timing, but we would not be confident that he/she had learned to control the nervousness. However, if a person has repeated anxiety-free behaviour on two consecutive five-minute timings, we have greater confidence that control of nervousness has been achieved.

These three examples are good models to refer back to.

Look at the four employment targets listed below and compare them with the ones we have just studied. What is missing? Examine each of them to determine whether or not the behaviour, standard and conditions are adequately described.

1. As an outcome of employment counselling, I would like to be able to call at least two potential employers each day on my own initiative until I find the job I want.

2. As an outcome of employment counselling, I want to be a good worker.

3. As an outcome of employment counselling, I want to speak at office meetings.

4. As an outcome of employment counselling, I would like to speak at monthly meetings with my supervisor for at least 6 minutes without being nervous.

In the first employment target, the client wants to contact potential employers. The act of calling potential employers is a behaviour that is able to be measured. The specific action the client is going to take is well specified. The condition under which the specific action is to take place is "on my own initiative". With such an employment target, both the employment counsellor and the client know exactly what the client wants to accomplish, under what conditions and to what extent. The employment target is capable of being measured after a period of time that the counsellor and the client agree upon to determine whether or not the client has in fact reached his/her target.

In the second employment target, none of the three basic characteristics is specified. We do not know what a client means by being a "good worker", and therefore, we cannot measure whether or not he/she accomplishes the target.

The third employment target suffers from the same shortcomings as does the "good worker" example. However, the fourth is essentially the same as the third except that the employment counsellor obtained the required specificity, probably by asking the client such questions as, "What do you mean when you say "Speak at office meetings"?

Of the three basic characteristics of employment targets, determining a level of acceptable performance is perhaps the most difficult one to accomplish. This criterion requires that the target behaviour specify how often and how well the behaviour is to be performed. For example, to choose as an employment target "job hunting" gives no indication of successful performance. If the target behaviour is stated as "preparing a list of potential employers and contacting them by the end of the week", then both the employment counsellor and the client will be able to determine whether the client has reached his/her goal.

2. Formulate target statement. By now you have probably gone ahead and formulated in your mind a method of constructing employment targets. Remember that in stating employment targets we are answering the question, "How will I be able to tell when the client has reached his/her target behaviour?"

A recommended format for the writing of employment targets is to first specify the behaviour, then the standard under which it is to be performed, and finally the conditions under which the behaviour will be carried out.

Typical employment targets might read as follows:

Behaviour	To study in electronics...
Standard	...so well that I pass the board licensing exam on my first attempt
Conditions	...before June of this year

Collectively, the employment target would be: To study electronics so well that I pass the board licensing exam on my first attempt before June of this year.

Behaviour	To seek an accounting position...
Standard	...by having at least two job interviews each week for the next three weeks...
Conditions	...in my geographic area and among employers encouraging flexible working hours

Collectively, the employment target would read: To seek an accounting position by having at least two job interviews each week for the next three weeks in my geographic area and among employers encouraging flexible working hours.

Recall that, as mentioned early in this section, it will not always be necessary to be as detailed in target formulation with each client. In learning correct target formulation, however, it is necessary to be very specific and in practice, the more specific the target, the more counsellor and client know where they are attempting to go and the more they will know when they have arrived.

3. Importance of client participation in specifying employment target. The major goal of Systematic Employment Counselling is to provide clients with the skills required to enable them to assume responsibility and to make their own decisions. In order to meet this end, employment counselling must be a two-way mutual learning process. It is dependent for its effectiveness upon both your possessing the skill to communicate your understanding of a client's concerns as well as your ability to apply appropriate strategies in order to facilitate the client's self-exploration, self-understanding, goal setting, and decision-making, all of which lead to constructive action on the part of the client.

Systematic Employment Counselling does not involve doing something to your client to help him/her feel better; it involves working together with your client to translate his/her concerns into employment targets and to help him/her develop an action plan to achieve them. Client participation is perhaps most critical in the "Determine Employment Target" stage of Systematic Employment Counselling because the formulation of goals and subsequent employment targets are the building blocks for all other stages in the employment counselling process. The strategies to be selected and/or combined to assist clients are tailored specifically to the goals and employment targets.

4. Obtain verification of client acceptance of target statement. Because employment targets must reflect client choices, it is necessary to obtain your client's acceptance of the target statement before moving on in the counselling process.

As a counsellor you must use those counselling leads that will serve to facilitate both the target setting process and your client's understanding and acceptance of the selected employment target. If your client selects what he/she considers to be a feasible employment target and you do not agree, then both of you must decide either to pursue the employment target, to renegotiate the employment target, or to refer your client to another source, as we shall discuss shortly.

A counselling skill particularly useful at this point in the counselling process is concretizing. Concretizing involves helping the client to clarify his/her thinking in the most basic and understandable terms. Helping to remove all ambiguity from what a client has stated is the counsellor's goal.

Let's look at two examples:

Example 1

Client: ...but I could probably do a little something on it every week if I thought about it, if you know what I mean. I'm not all that busy right now.

Counsellor: You're willing to work on it, but I'm not certain just how much time you could put in. Two minutes? Two hours? Two days?

Client: Uh, well, two days seems like it's over my head, but I could put in two hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays. They're the best days for me right now. ...Yeah, I could do that all right.

Example 2:

Client: ...so like I said, I just get cheezed off and blow up. I tell him exactly what I think and then I get fired. So you're right - if I'm going to keep a job, I have to keep cool.

Counsellor: Let's look at what conditions exist when you blow up. You certainly don't blow up all the time, but some of the time it gets too much to handle. What is really happening on the job when you blow up?

Client: It's always the same. The presses are running and you can't hear yourself think. He comes out with some urgent thing and I'm supposed to stop my run and salute. If I do that, then I have to re-set the press and he says I'm not meeting my quota - so I blow.

Counsellor: So it's those precise times - when you're working and at the same time have to do something urgent - that you find too much.

Client: Yeah - and it is too much - it's not fair.

Counsellor: So when we talk about staying cool to keep your job, we're really talking about learning a different way of handling a very specific situation.

Notice that the counsellor in each example is seeking, through concretizing, to translate the goal into very specific target terms which will be achievable by the client. Furthermore the client is fully involved in reaching the target point.

EXERCISE III

Formulate a response for each of the following client statements which accomplishes two things:

1. moves the client toward target formulation

2. uses concretizing to remove ambiguity

(a) "I guess that's worth working on. I guess I'd like to do it. But I'm pretty busy - guess it would depend on how much I'd have to do".

(b) "So I try to get there on time. I just don't always make it. It's tough getting the kids off to school and the buses are late sometimes too. And my boss is so unreasonable".

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(c) "I was so ready for that interview. I practiced, felt good, but something happened on my way. I just got all tongue-tied and by the time I got there I knew it was hopeless".

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(d) "So that's how my parents see it. If I'd just get my hair cut, learn some manners and act decent, I'd get a job. But I'm me - people have to take me as I am".

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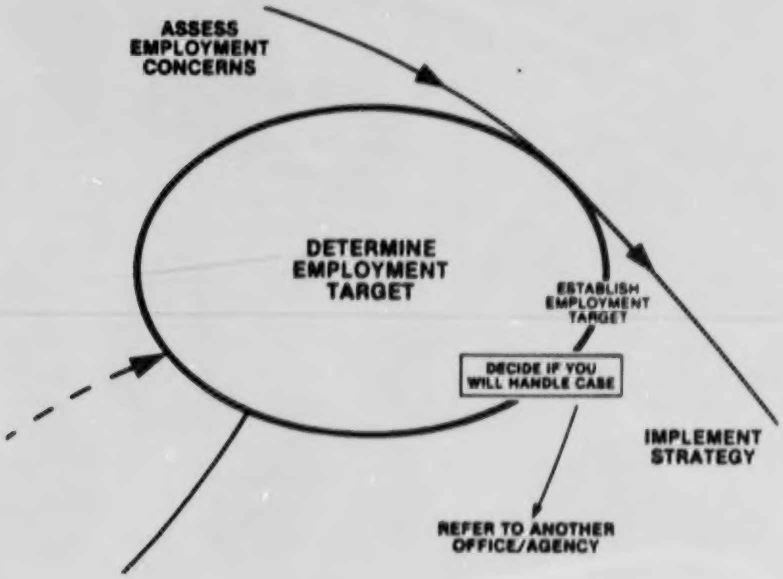
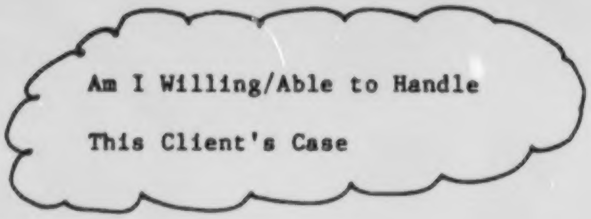
Decide if You Will Handle Case


ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
DECIDE IF YOU WILL HANDLE CASE
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

At this point in the employment counselling process, you obviously know a great deal about your client's past and present behaviours, the goal your client wants to achieve, and the specific targets required to bring about change. Throughout the process of learning more about your client, you will have been asking yourself whether or not you can help this particular client, whether or not your skills and resources are up to the task. If the client's needs are clearly out of your expertise to handle, it is likely that this would have been identified already, particularly at the assessment phase. This is not always the case, however, as much additional client information results from the targeting procedures. It is extremely important that you ask yourself whether or not you can help this client before proceeding further. This is not so much a specific step in Systematic Employment Counselling but rather a mental check. Frequently and unfortunately, counsellors believe they have to be all things to all people. Before they realize it, they are on a collision course and in over their heads. Because of this false demand many counsellors place upon themselves, they do not consciously ask the questions "Am I the best person to help this client achieve what he/she needs?" "Is this target one I feel I can work with successfully?" Rather they continue despite the uncomfortable feeling (and it is almost always there) that they are in too deep. This mental check exists as an encouragement to counsellors to address the uncomfortable feeling. If it is not there, the likelihood is strong that the target is indeed one which is within your expertise. If it is there, however, now is the time to carefully assess whether or not referral to another source or agency is more appropriate and likely to be of more benefit to the client. Systematic Employment Counselling goes one step further. If your conclusion is that the target *is* within your expertise, it is recommended that you verbalize this to the client. This not only is encouraging for the client; it ensures that you have indeed asked the question. This mental check can be visualized as follows:



(1) Determine if employment target is appropriate for you to handle.

(2) Re-evaluate initial goals and employment targets.

(3) Make referral to appropriate source

or

(4) Verbalize your commitment to client.

This process takes but a few moments. You will also need to quickly assess the factor of time in making your decision. If the counselling target is within your expertise but your judgement tells you it will take more than 5 interviews to progress, you may jeopardize your client's chances of success by continuing. It is much better to refer such a client to an agency where counsellor-client work-loads will permit time-intensive work for a more extended time-frame. Given your relatively constant client overload, it is important to work on employment targets which are realistic and attainable within your work environment. Frequently, compromises can be negotiated which are more productive for both the counsellor and client. Take for example, a client who reports and indeed shows symptoms of depression weight loss, inability to sleep, constant fatigue, low concentration and at the same time, a contributing factor to the depression is having no choice but to work and having very limited marketable skills. It is not reasonable for you to attempt to handle the client's depression. It may be very reasonable to refer the client for assistance in this area with an outside agency and simultaneously agree to meet for a specified number of times to explore training opportunities. This may not necessarily include a decision regarding training at this time (the client may not be ready or able to do so) but the forward planning involved in accessing needed information may be very beneficial. This reinforces the importance of verbalizing your commitment to your client so that he/she knows specifically that you want to work with him/her. This may be accomplished in one or two brief sentences such as:

"Jim, I feel confident about the employment target we have set. I'm certainly prepared to do all I can to help you achieve it".

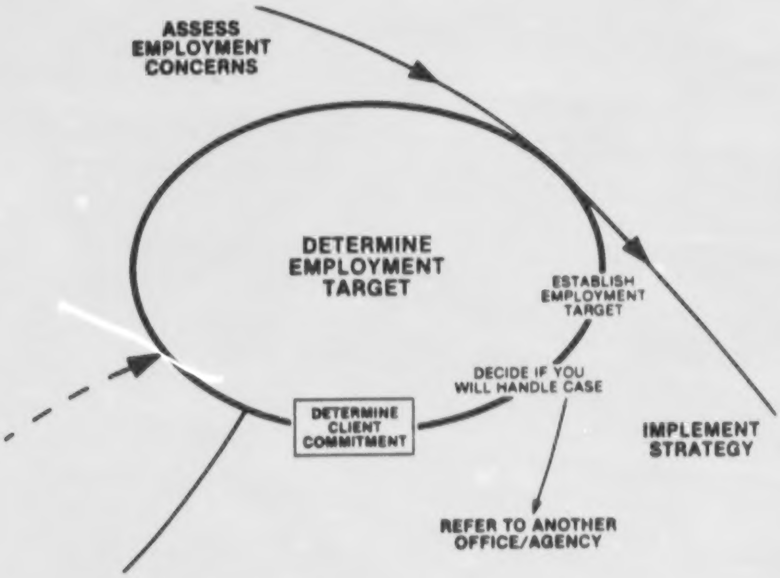
or

"I feel much better now that we've clarified what I believe I can help you to achieve. I'll make that referral for you this week and in the meantime, I think I can help you acquire helpful information on training that we can consider together".

The important ingredient is that your commitment to your client is firm, clear and easily understood.

Let's look graphically at where we are in the process and at the next step:

Determine Client Commitment


ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
DECIDE IF YOU WILL HANDLE CASE
DETERMINE CLIENT COMMITMENT
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

Your commitment to work with your client is critical. Obviously your client's commitment to work with you to achieve the established target is even more crucial. This too must be verified.

If the preceding steps have been done well, your client has by now a clear understanding of his/her employment target together with your verbal commitment to work with him/her on target attainment. You are ready to elicit commitment from your client to do the work required to pursue the employment target.

Is my Client Committed to Accepting
my Assistance in Helping Him/Her
Attain His/Her Employment Target?

(1) Assess degree of client commitment.

(2) Explore sources of reluctance (if any).

(3) Discuss cost and effort factors with client.

1. Assess degree of client commitment. A useful lead for assessing client commitment might be:

"Karen, obtaining a part-time job as a data analyst may take a lot of effort regardless of your work experience. Before digging into it, perhaps we had better consider exactly how committed you are to this".

or

"Jim, learning these new skills will take several practices together and several practice sessions on your own. How willing are you to put in the time required to do this?"

You are looking for an indication that the client is willing to pursue the employment target throughout the counselling sessions per se and through the homework required outside of the counselling sessions.

In some instances, you may be so confident of the client's motivation to continue that you can almost instantaneously make the decision to move on to developing an action plan designed specifically to achieve the employment target. On other occasions you may detect client hesitation towards making a commitment, such as the client who asks "How long will this take?" or indicates "I'm not sure what I can do about the situation."

Because no further progress can be made in the counselling process until you have obtained client commitment to work towards achieving the employment targets, you must be careful to identify and to discuss client motivation when any doubt exists.

Let us look at the following dialogues:

Counsellor: You've mentioned how busy you are. Perhaps we should consider for a moment whether you really have time to continue in counselling.

Client: Oh.. I'm always short of time...I guess I complain a lot about my lack of time.

Counsellor: ...And continuing counselling would cut into what time you do have.

Client: Yeah, but I'm not that busy. I really want to continue counselling...I think it will really help me.

Not much doubt exists as to this client's commitment. Two counsellor leads have clarified the matter and the counsellor can go on to the next stage in the counselling process.

2. Explore sources of reluctance, if any. Let's now take into consideration another possibility:

Counsellor:	You've mentioned how busy you are. Perhaps we should consider for a moment whether you really have time to continue in counselling.
Client:	Oh...I'm always short of time. I seem to get involved in things and then wish I had the time for something else.
Counsellor:	And counselling...is this a commitment you wish you hadn't made?
Client:	Well, I don't know...I'm not sure...I'm a little confused as to just how much I'm really going to get out of it.

It is obvious that this client is not fully committed. In such a case, the client's hesitancy should be discussed openly. A counsellor might say "You seem hesitant about committing yourself to work with me right now." In so doing, the counsellor will check out the client's readiness to continue at this time. Such clarification might result in the client's being quite committed to continuing or alternately might result in the client recognizing that he/she is not prepared to do what is needed. Much more will be learned in the next chapter about working effectively with reluctant clients.

3. Discuss cost and effort factors with the client. The clarification process may be a rather extended one in which the counsellor may have to refer back to the initial selection of concerns and discuss the "costs" of counselling in light of the stated concerns and the probability of being able to do something about it. The result of this discussion, however well handled, may be that the client desires to terminate counselling at which time the client can be helped to locate and to set up an appointment with a different counsellor or agency should he/she so desire.

Use of the term "costs" seems appropriate when one considers sources of low client motivation. Among the "costs" to the client may be one or more of the following:

1. Time is being expended in travelling to the counsellor's office and participating in counselling.

2. Money may be expended (e.g. time lost on job, transportation costs).

3. Participation in counselling is probably anxiety-producing.

4. Risks of various types may be involved that the client doesn't wish to cope with.

5. Participation in counselling may be unsettling and make the client's life less comfortable than it was.

6. The client may be asked to discuss matters or perform tasks outside the interview that are personally embarrassing such as practicing new behaviours with a friend.

Individuals will give quite different weights to the various costs, dependent upon their personality and life style. One client may find a risk to be insurmountable and withdraw from full commitment to counselling. Another, faced with a much greater risk, may accept it as necessary and remain committed.

Cues indicating lessened motivation may be subtle. You may be aware of a change in motivational level and yet may be unable to specify why motivation seems to be lessened. In determining whether or not the client has sufficient motivation to proceed to implement a strategy, three basic measures of commitment can be used.

1. Your client has verbally agreed that the employment targets are appropriate.

2. You and your client have discussed client costs involved (e.g. time, money, risk, anxiety, embarrassment).

3. Your client has verbalized commitment to work with this concern after a discussion of costs.

Two counselling skills that might be effective at this point in the counselling process are perception checking and mild confrontation.

Perception checking occurs when a counsellor is unsure about his/her perceptions of a client's verbal and/or nonverbal behaviour or when the counsellor has a hunch that bears trying out.

Example

Client:	...that's why I am here but I have my classes to attend and my kids to take care of. I'm always so short of time. It's going to be awfully hard for me to stick to any kind of an action plan.
Counsellor:	...I feel that you are not certain about working on the target we set. Can we talk about that?

Mild confrontation involves providing honest feedback about what a counsellor really thinks is going on with a client. The confrontation usually focuses on the discrepancy between client verbalization and observed client behaviour such as "On the one hand, you say you are hurt by not getting that job, but on the other hand you seem to be relieved at not having to begin work."

Example

Client:	"...Working on getting a job is very important to me" (verbal message) ... but calls off the next two sessions (behaviour).

Counsellor: ...Several weeks ago you said how important working towards job placement is to you, yet I'm aware that you called off our last two meetings.

Lack of client commitment may not be evident at this point in counselling but may occur during later sessions, when your client is actually working on change. You will need to deal with any evidence of client resistance whenever it occurs. In some cases, your client may be dissatisfied with the employment target or the consequences produced by the changes. For these reasons, employment targets can never be viewed as fixed and permanent, without need of modification or revision. As mentioned earlier, methods of dealing with client reluctance will be dealt with in much greater detail in Chapter 3.

EXERCISE IV a

Peter, a former lumberjack, is giving you messages that are unclear to you. On the one hand, he seems enthused about continuing to work with you in finding a job that interests him. However, he gives some indications of fearing failure and wanting to not continue in counselling.

Record two responses that you might use to check whether or not both perceptions are, to a degree at least, accurate.

1. ____

2. ____

Although in some sense both messages may be accurate, one may be a much more dominant message than the other. Write out two responses that you might use to determine this.

3. ____

4. ____

EXERCISE IV b

Eva, our unhappy waitress, has now committed herself to an ambitious career target and seems totally committed to pursuing it. You fear, however, that she may not have considered carefully the difficulties she may encounter. You therefore wish to mildly confront her to make certain she is not surprised by these difficulties at a later time.

Write out two mild confrontation responses you might use to alert Eva to these difficulties.

1. ____

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2. ____

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Eva may overreact to your confrontation and believe you are telling her that she is incapable of undertaking this target. List two responses you might use if this occurred.

EXERCISE IV b (continued)

3. ______________________________

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4. ______________________________

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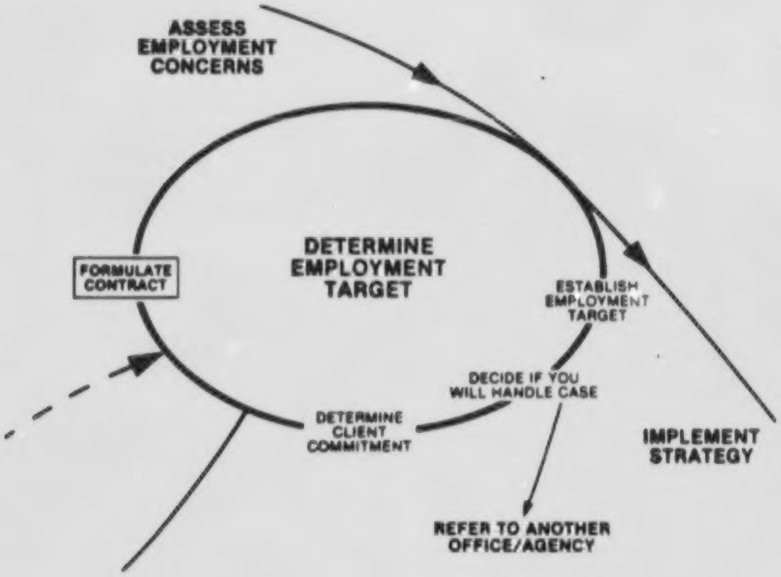
Formulate a contract


ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
FORMULATE CONTRACT
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
DECIDE IF YOU WILL HANDLE CASE
DETERMINE CLIENT COMMITMENT
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

The movement of this stage of employment counselling towards the establishing of an employment counselling contract is by now probably clear to you. Several important elements of a contract are already in place - a goal is now stated in very precise target terms, you have decided you can assist in reaching the target, you have indicated this verbally and your client has similarly indicated verbally that he/she is prepared to work toward target achievement.

The classic type of contract used within counselling settings is of course the Behaviour Contract. The basic essentials of this type of contract are that one party promises to do something and the other agrees to do something in return.

This is used in a number of behaviour modification situations ranging from the informal where a parent may agree with a child that if he/she does the dishes regularly and without being asked for one week, the parent will reward with a special activity or purchase to highly formal situations where a therapist may reward with cashable tokens a series of highly specific behaviours. This type of contract is very rarely applicable within an employment setting as counsellors do not have rewards to dispense and are not in situations where they can exert control over the client's external environment.

The type of contract we refer to here is more simply the formalizing of a counsellor-client agreement to work towards change. It has two main purposes: First, it serves as a client motivator. The concretizing of an intent to change by not only telling another person but by writing it down, makes it more difficult not to follow through. Reflect for a moment on the number of promises we may make to ourselves, never share them and certainly not record them - how easy these promises are to break when compared with commitments we have told another we intend to accomplish. Making a written statement and formally signing it has great potency. Having this visually reviewed at subsequent sessions adds to the potency. Second, contracts serve as a type of cognitive map that illustrate the route to goal attainment. It is not enough to simply visualize the way your client can achieve his/her goal. Contracts provide counsellor and client with a concrete method of ensuring that both stay on track. In addition they reinforce for the client that his/her role in target achievement is active, not passive.

In Systematic Employment Counselling, the formal contract occurs in two stages. Stage 1 occurs now following target formulation and commitment and is very simply the writing down of both goal and target. Stage 2 occurs during the strategy stage when counsellor and client are deciding together the action steps to be taken to achieve the target. We will elaborate on this in Chapter 4.

Returning to our earlier example with Jim, the contract at this point would appear as follows:

CONTRACT BETWEEN MR. BERNARD AND JIM -

STARTING DATE: October 30, 1981

Counselling Goal: To practice and learn job interview skills

Employment Target: To practice and learn 5 specific job interview skills so well that I obtain 3 job interviews in the repair field on my own initiative and to aim towards achieving this within 3 weeks.

Action Steps to be Taken	Person Responsible
1. To be completed as strategy(s) decided upon.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

The counsellor would have introduced this step very naturally as in the following example:

Counsellor:	OK Jim, we've moved quite a distance in this interview. We now know what you want to get out of our work together so let's get started. As a means of keeping us on track, we'll begin to work out a contract. We know what we want to achieve so let's put that down. As we decide on how we're going to proceed, we'll add that information. That way we'll have a record of our progress. Sound OK so far?

The advantages of using counselling contracts are obvious.

As mentioned earlier, they act as motivators, particularly for clients who tend to procrastinate and they act as cognitive maps for client and counsellor.

In addition:

- the precise nature of a contract enables your client to feel a sense of accomplishment as he/she progresses;
- the contract situation forces your client to assume responsibility for his/her action; and
- the contract provides time restraints that will encourage both you and your client to work as effectively as possible.

Not every client situation lends itself nicely to the contractual approach nor is a written contract necessary with all clients. In situations where the target is relatively simple, does not require much client learning or re-learning and can be achieved within one or two interviews, a contract would not be necessary and indeed might not even be appropriate. Highly motivated clients who know or can easily be helped to see the steps necessary to attain their goals and can take that first step without much support do not need the extra motivation provided by the contract approach. Certainly, counsellor judgment is required. However, for the many clients who cannot see clearly what is needed to obtain employment and/or have difficulty sustaining the effort required to succeed, the contract can be a very helpful technique.

Checkpoint

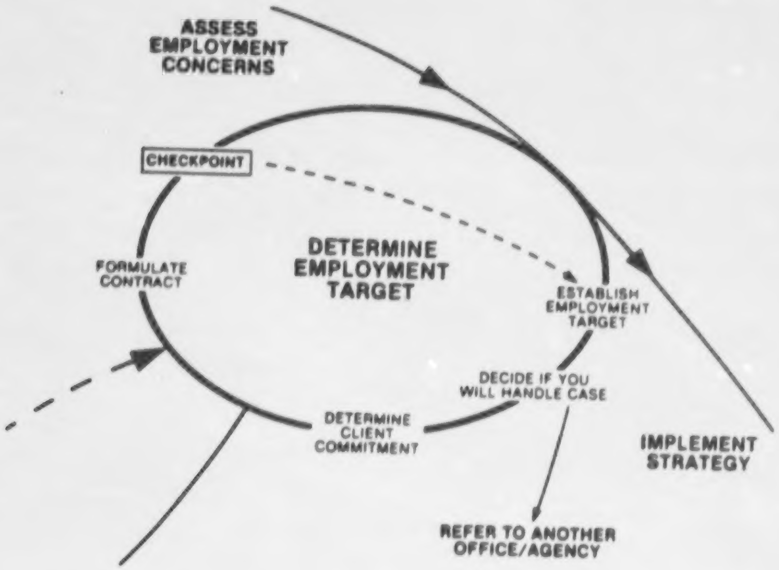

ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
CHECKPOINT
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
FORMULATE CONTRACT
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
DECIDE IF YOU WILL HANDLE CASE
DETERMINE CLIENT COMMITMENT
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

Figure 2. Sequence of steps in Determining Employment Target

As you work through the final steps of the target stage, it is quite appropriate that you wonder whether or not all steps have been completed. We call this process of mental searching checkpoint. It serves two vital functions:

(a) it tells us to pause momentarily to mentally recall the adequacy of our coverage of each step; and

(b) it reminds us that now is the time to recycle to a step that has been covered inadequately.

When we leave this stage, we want to feel assured that each step within it has been thoroughly covered. Checkpoint is a sort of "quality control" function to focus our attention on how completely we have performed this stage. In practice, you would consider whether or not any of the following possibilities has occurred:

1. Has your client shown in some way that he/she does not understand the target?

2. Have you failed to clearly state that you are willing and able to work with your client toward reaching this target?

3. Has your client demonstrated a lack of commitment that suggests continuation of counselling would be inappropriate at this time? Perhaps some other source of assistance should be sought.

4. Is there reason to believe that either you or your client is dissatisfied with the contract or does not understand it fully?

All of these are valid questions that you would process rather quickly before considering this stage of Systematic Employment Counselling to be completed. Our way of indicating graphically that some "error" or shortcoming has been identified is to place the dotted arrow between CHECKPOINT and the first step, ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET, as is shown in the preceding Figure 2. This does not mean, that the repair work lies within the first step, but is used to suggest that we quickly "sort forward" from ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET to the step that needs our attention.

To operationalize CHECKPOINT, we would first consider whether or not we had established a sound and specific target. If our answer was positive, we would then recall whether or not we had made our commitment to the client verbally known, and so forth. If, for example, we have begun this brief memory search and sensed that we weren't certain our client was fully committed, despite earlier assurances, we would need to check that out by a response such as, "Pat, you said a few minutes ago that you were determined to find a job in the electronics industry regardless of how far it took you from your family. When we were working on the contract, however, I sensed some reluctance. If we're carving out a path that you're not comfortable in travelling, let's talk about it before we go any further. Are you having some second thoughts?"

This counselling technique is called recycling. It can be defined as a counsellor response that directs the interaction back to a prior step in the counselling system. The purpose of recycling must be clearly understood by the client.

Let's look at two additional examples:

Example 1

Mr. A. has been working with Claudia in developing her target and commitment concerning whether or not to obtain employment now that her children are in school. Before leaving this stage, he pauses briefly to consider his coverage of each step and recalls that, although he committed himself to working with Claudia and he had attempted to gain a commitment from her, she had been evasive and her degree of commitment was unclear to him. Rather than apologizing for his lack of understanding or commenting that they had forgotten something, Mr. A. says:

Mr. A.: "Claudia, one point remains unclear to me. I've told you that I'm interested in working with you on this, but I'm not certain how committed you are. We've discussed the time and energy "costs" for you to work this through. Before we go further, I'd like to know if you have some reluctance or are concerned about the value of what we are doing."

Claudia: "It just seems sort of impossible. Sure, I'd like to find a job as a data processor. It would be great to use those skills I learned so long ago, but the whole thing seems kind of scary. Like a dream. I'm not certain everything will fall in place right away. ...But I sure want to try."

Mr. A.: "Claudia, I'm certain that it does seem scary right now. I'm glad that you want to get started and I'll help you to develop a plan that minimizes the possibility of failure. Fair enough?"

With this point clarified, Mr. A. now begins to work on the next stage of the counselling process.

Example 2

Client: (as the counsellor finishes the process of formulating the contract during the target and commitment stage): "That's a lot to do. I'd sure like to get a job like that, but my baby is only thirteen months old and the other one has had a terrible cold. If my mother were out of the hospital, she could help. This really is a tough time to begin anything that's pretty chancy to begin with."

Counsellor: "Earlier we talked about all our planning being rather a wasteful use of your time and mine unless we were certain that you could really work hard on this. Before we go any further, I'd like to re-open the topic. I realize that you have several pressures upon you--and I can accept that. I'd like us to reconsider if we should go ahead with our planning right now, or should we wait until matters at home make this easier to manage. What do you think?"

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It is not only theoretically possible, but quite probable that in some situations you may make two or three "trips around the loop" of this stage before you are comfortable in believing that CHECKPOINT has fully been completed. Rather than feeling inept or imperceptive, you might better consider such actions as a good investment of time. Until we're certain of where our client wants to go and that he/she is fully committed to getting started, we would be ill-advised to go further.

Once we're confident that each step has been covered well, we turn our attention to exploring with our client which of several strategies is most appropriate for helping him/her to reach the target we have just developed together.

Before leaving this stage to look at strategies, let us look at how far we have come in this chapter. We began by listing a series of questions which by following a system a counsellor would be able to handle. These questions were:

1. Did I help my client to state a goal and to recall, clarify and confirm commitment to goal achievement?

2. Did I help my client translate the goal into a realistic and achievable target?

3. Did I assess my ability to help my client achieve the target?

4. Did I give my verbal commitment to my client?

5. Did my client give his/her verbal commitment?

6. Did I work to continually improve our counselling relationship?

7. Did we formalize a contract?

8. Did I verify that we had covered all steps?

We then began to gradually build the steps in this stage of the system. These can now be graphically represented as follows:

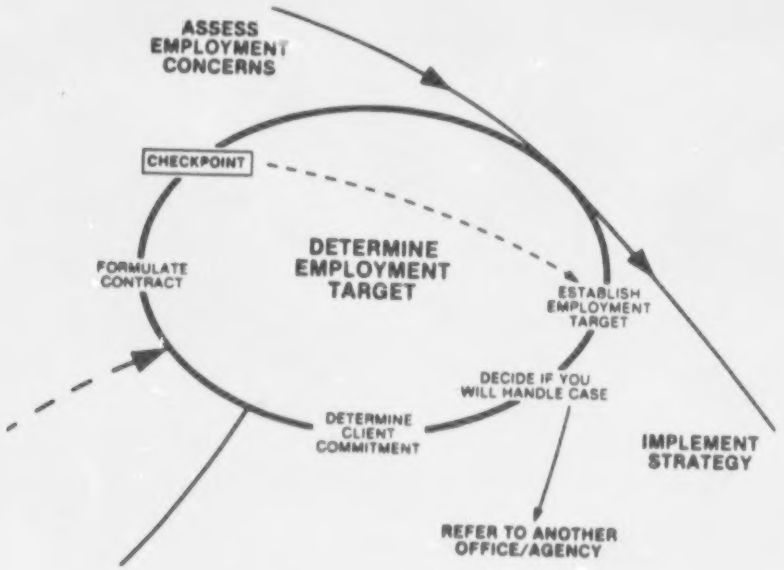

ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
CHECKPOINT
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
FORMULATE CONTRACT
ESTABLISH EMPLOYMENT TARGET
DECIDE IF YOU WILL HANDLE CASE
DETERMINE CLIENT COMMITMENT
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

Figure 2. Sequence of steps in Determine Employment Target

With some clients, covering all steps may be relatively fast. This depends on the nature of the target, the client's motivation and the counsellor's skill. With other clients, these steps will be more time consuming. With all clients, however, the steps should be covered and counsellor and client are now ready to move into the selection of appropriate strategies for client achievement and success.

Summary

Prior to goal setting, the employment counselling focus was on learning about a client's concerns by working through a series of complaint and constraint statements and assisting the client to move forward to perceiving the resolution to his/her employment difficulties as a contingency situation - i.e. "If I am to resolve X, then I must learn to achieve/work on Y & Z. With the movement towards delineating counselling goals, emphasis is placed upon identifying those future behaviours or responses that the client would like to and needs to learn as a result of employment counselling. A major promise of Systematic Employment Counselling is that unless specific goals are well-established early in the employment counselling process and unless client commitment to these goals is obtained, no further real progress is possible. Assuming that following the Assessment interview your client remains committed to his/her goal and that this goal is realistic, precise and attainable, you would proceed immediately to the planning of action steps to achieve the goal.

In those instances where the goals must be further broken down into smaller, achievable units (employment targets), more work is required. Employment targets, to be useful, should include three components: behaviour, standards and conditions. The behaviour specifies what the client will be able to do as a result of the employment counselling process; the standards indicate for how long or how well the behaviour in question is to be performed while the conditions include the limits that surround the performance of the behaviour.

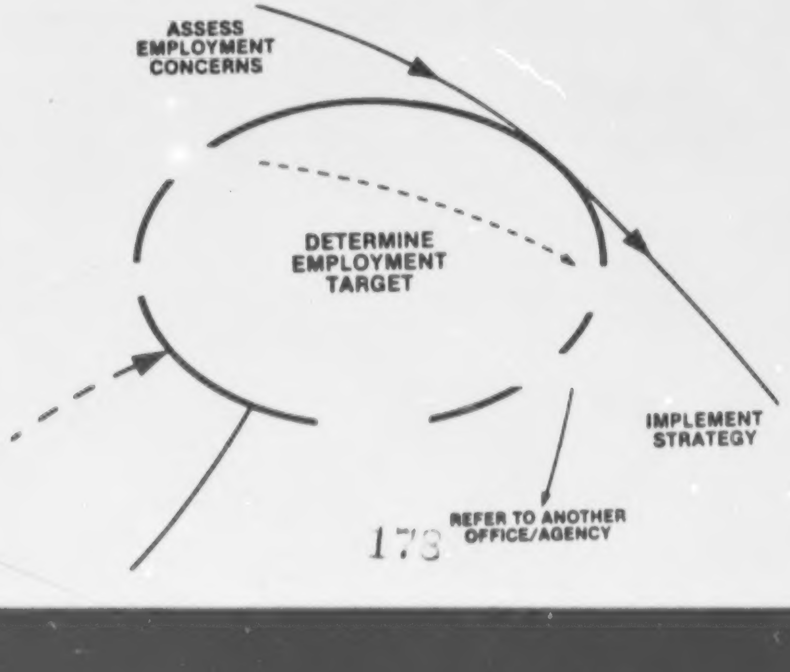
Once the action plan has been developed to help the client attain the employment targets, the client must be prepared for the procedures to be followed and a verbal or written contract drawn up in this regard. This process having been satisfactorily completed and while maintaining the facilitative relationship throughout, you and your client are ready to move on!

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Estelle came into your office several weeks ago looking for steady employment. Both of you agreed upon a desirable counselling target. Upon seeing you a second time, you realize that Estelle is experiencing second thoughts with respect to the target. Not only is she no longer sure of her target but also she is not totally convinced that she can achieve it.

   What would you do to help Estelle become refocused and recommitted to goal achievement?

2. Using the diagram below, fill in the systematic steps required to move from general counselling goals through to strategy selection.


ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
REFER TO ANOTHER OFFICE/AGENCY

3(a) Differentiate between a goal and an employment target.

(b) Are goals and employment targets always distinguishable? Explain.

4. Suggest ways in which you can help a client to state an employment target.

5. For each of the following cases, state a desirable goal and an appropriate employment target. Be sure that the 3 characteristics of employment targets have been met in your statements. Keep in mind the suggested format provided on page 119.

Case A: The client, 35 years old, communicates well but has difficulty reading and writing. He enjoys manual work having been actively involved in this work for 10 years. However, he'd like to upgrade his job level. He wishes to know how to read and write better.

GOAL ______________________________

____

EMPLOYMENT TARGET

Behaviour ______________________________

Standard ______________________________

Conditions ______________________________

Case B: The client, an experienced teacher, just moved from Ottawa to Vancouver. She decided to relocate due to her husband's transfer to Vancouver. She is depressed because of the non-availability of teaching jobs.

GOAL ______________________________

____

EMPLOYMENT TARGET

Behaviour ______________________________

Standard ______________________________

Conditions ______________________________

Case C: The client is an intelligent young man experienced in his field and able to get good jobs but lost two jobs due to "basic philosophical differences" with his boss. One was at a highway department which he felt built roads which were unnecessary and a waste of the tax payer's money and the other was with an insurance company which he felt was dishonest with clients.

GOAL ______________________________

____

EMPLOYMENT TARGET

Behaviour ____________________

Standard ____________________

Conditions ____________________

Case D: The client graduated with honours in her secretarial class and achieved marks in excess of 80 wpm in the typing course. However, when she goes in for employment testing, she freezes. This results in many errors, a slow speed, and test failure.

GOAL ____________________

____

EMPLOYMENT TARGET

Behaviour ____________________

Standard ____________________

Conditions ____________________

Case E: This client had a severe auto accident and after a long hospitalization had recovered but was left with a slight limp. The client is embarrassed about the limp and prefers to stay home rather than engaging in the normal activities that were part of his/her life prior to the accident. The client expresses the desire to return to a normal active life but finds it more comfortable just to stay home.

GOAL ______________________________

____

EMPLOYMENT TARGET

Behaviour ______________________________

Standard ______________________________

Conditions ______________________________

6. As a means of integrating the material presented throughout this chapter and giving you some experience in critically reviewing the handling of a case, the work of Ms. R. with her client, Guy, is presented in the paragraphs that follow. Please note the grid presented on page 169 before beginning your reading. As you read each portion of the case of Guy, make appropriate referral to the grid and record your responses.

Ms. R. is holding her second interview with Guy, a 30 year old who has lost two jobs within the past six months and now wants to find a more challenging position in which he can use his math skills. Ms. R. helped Guy to dream about ideal positions. Together they explored reasons why Guy considered pure mathematics, statistics, and logistical planning to be ideal fields and the specific occupations related to each. She then helped him to think in more concrete terms about a position he could realistically seek and considered the following specific target:

During evening and week-end hours in the next three weeks Guy will seek a position as an audit clerk in a medium-sized insurance company within the metropolitan area by contacting and interviewing with at least four firms.

Ms. R. explored several reasons why Guy might be reluctant to work through this concern with her. She helped him to accept the risk of rejection as part of a new venture and helped him weigh this risk against the thought of continued unhappiness.

When he had carefully considered the "costs" to him and expressed a desire to pursue a job as audit clerk, Ms. R. talked with Guy about the advantages of their developing a written contract. She involved Guy in outlining the responsibilities that both she and Guy would assume. Together they recorded them and reviewed the listed expectations. Guy reported that he was very satisfied.

Before beginning to implement the contract, Ms. R. thought quickly about her coverage of each step she had undertaken in this stage. She wanted to make certain that she had not skipped any step before beginning a new activity. She then noted a need to go over two steps more carefully and began to do so.

CHECKPOINT GRID

From the case just presented, how well was each step of the goals and targets stage completed?

	COMPLETELY	PARTIALLY	NOT COVERED
Delineate counselling goal	________	________	________
Establish employment target	________	________	________
Decide if you will handle case	________	________	________
Determine client commitment	________	________	________
Formulate a contract	________	________	________
Checkpoint	________	________	________

One of the six steps was partially completed and one was omitted entirely.

In the space below indicate how you would alter the partially completed step so that it is completely satisfactory.

____

____

____

____

How would you complete the step that is omitted entirely? What specifically would you want to know and what would you say to the client?

Chapter 3

Reluctance

Overview

The preceding chapter has stressed the importance of establishing targets to be achieved through counselling, acquiring client commitment to work towards these targets and defining together with the client the action steps to be taken over time to achieve these targets. A cornerstone of effective Systematic Employment Counselling is that the more goal-directed the counselling offered, the more client change will result and the more clients will be assisted to become more responsible, independent and capable of resolving their employment difficulties.

The majority of clients are receptive to goal-directed counselling. Working with a goal-directed counsellor who focuses on clarifying realistic goals to be attained, assists in discovering and evaluating alternatives and breaking down action steps to be taken into achievable units, is a dynamic and encouraging process. Clients respond positively to being assisted to take power and responsibility for their own employment problem resolution.

There is, however, another substantial group of clients for whom the process is not so straight-forward and who, for a variety of reasons, are reluctant to seek the assistance of a counsellor and, if sought, are reluctant to trust and become involved in the counselling process, to commit themselves to goal attainment and to risk change. All experienced counsellors know the sinking feeling of sitting across from a client and sensing that his/her involvement is forced and uncomfortable. Experienced counsellors further know the feeling of not being certain what to do about this reluctance, whether to ignore, compensate or confront.

What is this reluctance and what are its likely sources? What can counsellors do to assist both their clients and themselves to recognize and deal with reluctance in a productive way? How can a systematic counselling approach assist this process? In this chapter we will examine reluctance, discuss counselling conditions which may assist to reduce reluctance and present a practical counselling strategy for working with reluctant clients.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Describe four sources of reluctant behaviour which are common in an employment counselling setting.

2. List and describe the counselling conditions which create safety, clarity and increased motivation.

3. Explain the rationale behind each counselling condition.

4. Discuss two theories of motivation as they apply to reluctant clients.

5. List six motivation principles which can be applied to employment counselling practice.

6. List the four steps of a counselling strategy for dealing with reluctance.

7. Given a case study, describe in writing how you would proceed to apply the four step counselling strategy.

8. Given a case study, list steps you would take with a reluctant client who has tried and failed.

Reluctance and its Sources

Vriend and Dyer (1975) define reluctance as an "unwillingness, either explicit or implicit, that manifests itself in a desire not to co-operate. Either partially or totally, the prospective client does not really want to be a client".[1] The very basis of the client-counsellor relationship is a partial explanation. The act of seeking a professional counsellor's assistance, whether it be for information, employment assistance or in other settings, for extended therapeutic treatment, is a silent statement that the counsellor knows something the client does not know, has experience and insights the client does not have, is able to find solutions which the client cannot find. At the same time, most of us prefer to be able to resolve our difficulties ourselves, without recourse to other sources of assistance, in particular strangers. A certain hesitancy about admitting that our difficulty, of whatever nature, requires outside assistance is not only understandable, but can be a healthy sign of wanting to be in control of one's own life and decisions. A reluctance to trust the counsellor as, in fact, having this "extra something" which the client lacks can also be seen as healthy and positive.

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1. Dyer, W; Vriend, J. Counselling Techniques that Work, APGA Press, Washington, 1975.

In an employment setting this type of reluctance can of course be expected. As stressed in Chapter 1, being unemployed is usually stressful; most clients would prefer that it never happen to them. Clients with a record of unemployment may only reluctantly allow a counsellor to assist them and clients whose U.I. benefits are about to terminate may experience reactions ranging from panic to bitter aggressivity. Furthermore, our employment service does not enjoy a blemish-free reputation and as a result, many clients may approach our service with a degree of skepticism and perhaps even negativism.

As employment counsellors, it is important to be able to recognize the forms that reluctance may take, to recognize it in clients and to have strategies for dealing with reluctance. Unfortunately, strategies for handling reluctance are frequently neglected in counsellor training programs. Indeed, most counselling theories are based on the assumption that clients come willingly, fully recognizing that they need outside assistance. Yet, in fact, many clients find themselves in counselling situations, in all settings, in which they do not want to be co-operative. Many counsellors find themselves in uncomfortable counselling situations, facing unco-operative clients and uncertain what to do.

The importance of resolving reluctance in counselling was clearly demonstrated in a recent study by Paradise and Wilder.[2] The purpose of their study was to examine the relationship between client reluctance and counselling outcomes.

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[2] Paradise, Louis V; Wilder, David H. The Relationship between Client Reluctance and Counselling Effectiveness. Journal of Occupational Psychology, Vol 52, No. 2, June, 1979 pp 240-246.

Using a university student population, the researchers measured client reluctance prior to receiving counselling and measured client satisfaction and perceived improvement following counselling. Their findings indicated the following:

1. the greater the degree of pre-counselling reluctance, the less improvement clients perceived in their problem areas and the less satisfaction with the counselling experience and with the individual counsellors.

2. the greater the degree of pre-counselling reluctance, the more likely that counselling would terminate prematurely.

These conclusions stress the importance of not ignoring reluctance in clients in the hope that it will merely dissipate as quality counselling proceeds.

These conclusions become more significant if the opinion of Vriend and Dyer is correct that the majority of clients seeking counselling are in one way or another reluctant.

The sources of reluctance are extremely diverse and the dynamics of reluctance range from very simple to highly complex. While it is generally true that all reluctance is born of fear, some understanding of the basis of these fears should assist counsellors to reach beyond the negative behaviours in order to establish a productive counselling relationship.

Four common sources of reluctance are outlined below:[3]

1. Fear of the unfamiliar. It is a truism to say that we fear what we do not understand and what we do not know. This is the reality for many clients who have never experienced a counselling relationship and do not know what they can realistically expect from a counsellor or what expectations a counsellor may have of them. They may be uncertain of what information to divulge and what to protect and may therefore view the process with considerable suspicion. Non-directive counselling can be particularly threatening to clients who fear the unfamiliar and/or are misinformed. Many clients are not accustomed to being listened to and having their thoughts and feelings paraphrased and reflected. The purposes of these interactions may be very unclear to them and the role of the counsellor very hard to decipher. This of course may increase rather than decrease their level of fear.

2. Refusal to acknowledge the problem and/or take responsibility for the problem. An aspect of this form of reluctance was referred to earlier. For many clients, acknowledging to another that they require help to find a job, that their unemployment records are weak, that they have been laid off or fired and/or that they simply do not know what to do can be demoralizing. Taking the position of 'I don't want to be here'; 'I'm only here because I have no choice' and 'I'm sure you can't help me but what have I got to lose' can become a means whereby their self-esteem is preserved. There is still a dominant social view

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[3] Amundson, N., Kenney, Suzanne. The Non-Voluntary Client.Unpublished Manuscript, 1979.

that seeking assistance is a symbol of weakness and failure and it is therefore frequently a challenge to seek assistance under the guise of not seeking it. Note that this type of reluctance is not be equated with the very reasonable hesitation non-reluctant clients may feel concerning the competencies of the counsellor which are as yet an unknown quantity. The type of reluctance described here does not depend on the counsellor demonstrating that he/she is capable; it rests on the individual client acknowledging that an employment problem exists, he/she owns the problem, it is okay to be skeptical but it is also okay to seek assistance.

A further demonstration of this type of reluctance occurs frequently in clients who, while acknowledging the problem, deny ownership of the problem. The tendency is to 'blame' the problem on external factors - 'If it weren't for my boss'; 'If it hadn't been for dropping out of school'; 'It's this stupid system which causes all my difficulties'. Blaming can become, for many persons, a system for avoiding responsibility. At the same time, such a system avoids making positive decisions to correct the situation. A frequently heard theme is 'Even if I did that, it wouldn't make any difference - he/she/it would still be there'. Cautionary notes must always be added when describing this form of reluctance. Individuals can have completely legitimate causes for blaming. Firings are certainly not always fair - the employer is not always right - significant others can make life difficult for any individual. The reluctance problem emerges when a client will not move beyond the blaming stage into a more productive stage of 'Given that is in the past, what can I do about my employment situation now?'.

3. Client versus the system. This type of client is most frequently seen in institutional settings ranging from schools to prisons. They perceive their problem to be the 'system' and the 'rules' of the system and expend much energy trying to 'beat the system'. One can see parallels with clients who wage constant battles with the 'bureaucracy'. Counsellors of course may receive the brunt of this form of reluctance because they represent the system and depend upon it for their livelihoods. Counsellors may be perceived as not wanting to assist the individual, but as wanting to implement the rules of the system by making the client fit the system. To co-operate with a counsellor means, ipso facto, yielding to a system which is seen to be destructive to individuality. This form of reluctance can be very difficult to deal with as it often manifests itself in a subtle struggle for power. The client wins if the counsellor fails in his/her efforts to assist. The client acquires a sense of power and personal control by defeating the system and proving that it doesn't work.

4. Secondary gains. Secondary gains can prompt a client's reluctance. The client does not want to be successfully helped because the secondary gain he/she is enjoying will terminate. This form of reluctance is of course common in our setting where people receiving unemployment insurance benefits must register for employment. Every employment counsellor has experienced clients who would prefer to postpone the counsellor's efforts for the period of coverage so they can enjoy the financial benefits without interference. Therefore the counsellor's suggestions can be expected to be met with resistance and negativism. Notice that we cannot consider clients reluctant who, in order to become employed, have to reduce their incomes substantially. This situation

presents hard, practical realities and difficult decisions and choices to be made. Very often the secondary gain is unknown to the counsellor and may orginate in highly personal areas of the client's life which she/he may not feel comfortable to share. Secondary gains may range from retaining a sense of freedom to fear that alimony payments will be reduced to being forced to take a difficult decision which can be avoided through financial dependency. These secondary gains place clients in legitimate conflictual situations but a counsellor, unaware of the dynamics operating, may be frustrated and confused by his/her apparent lack of counselling success.

Manifestations of Reluctance

Reluctance would present counsellors with few difficulties if its manifestations were straight-forward, predictable and easy to interpret. Such of course is not the case. Reluctance can take many behavioural forms including silence, hostility, defensiveness, avoidance and even apparent over-eagerness and over-co-operativeness. In addition to reluctance covering such a broad range of behaviours, these behaviours are not always reluctant. Silence, for example, can be merely a demonstration of shyness and insecurity and interpreting behaviours as reluctant must be handled very carefully.

There is no cook-book recipe for handling reluctant clients appropriately such that clients will abandon interfering reluctance and work actively and openly on resolving their employment difficulties. We can however look at three elements within employment counselling which may assist in working with and through reluctance.

These elements are:

1. Creating counselling conditions of safety and clarity
2. Creating counselling conditions which motivate
3. Specific counselling techniques

These elements are of course not pure and distinct and will overlap throughout the counselling process. For purposes of understanding, it is helpful to look at them as if they were distinct.

Creating Counselling Conditions of Safety and Clarity

Creating the counselling conditions necessary for working with reluctance involves both creating conditions of psychological safety for the client as well as reducing as much as possible what is unknown for the client.

The conditions necessary for psychological safety are those conditions with which you are all totally familiar. All your counselling training has emphasized the importance of attending, empathic understanding, warmth, genuineness and positive regard.

The Assessment component which you have completed stressed the importance of mutuality and collaborativeness in counselling. This module similarly stresses all these conditions as the imperative foundation of Systematic Employment Counselling.

These conditions allow clients to feel understood, accepted and therefore safe to trust the counsellor with the issues of concern to them. We discussed earlier that to a degree, all reluctance is born of fear. These fears may originate from an almost limitless diversity of life experiences and learning but feeling safe psychologically is essential in order for fears to reduce. It is axiomatic to state that the more safe we feel, the less we have to fear.

These conditions for psychological safety are however not enough. The second condition necessary for reluctant clients involves knowledge (reducing the unknown) and control (feeling oneself in charge). One of the common sources of reluctance is fear of the unknown and yet it is surprising how frequently reducing the unknown is omitted in counselling practice.

Within Systematic Employment Counselling and especially with reluctant clients, this step is considered very important because:

1. it assists clients to gain realistic expectations concerning what to expect from the counsellor and at the same time assists to dispel false notions and possible fears.

2. it involves the client immediately in a decision which he/she must take concerning whether to become involved in the counselling process. This provides the client with a sense of personal control from the beginning which reinforces the general purpose of counselling which is to render the individual client more responsible and more in control.

Explaining and structuring includes defining the PURPOSE, RESPONSIBLITIES, FOCUS and LIMITS of the employment counselling process. As you read this next section, you will recognize that similar concepts were discussed and taught in the Assessment module. This section is intended to review and reinforce what you have already learned and to draw particular attention to applications with reluctant clients.

Purpose

In explaining the purpose of counselling, counsellors should stress that counselling is essentially a learning situation which focuses on assisting clients to make employment decisions, find and use employment information and learn employment related skills and behaviours if required. The kind of learning acquired through counselling can be used by the client in dealing with employment difficulties they may face in the future. These ideas could be explained as follows:

"The purpose of counselling is to assist you with the concerns you have about deciding on, finding or keeping employment which you find satisfying and which meets your needs. Our work together will be successful if, at the end, you feel you have learned and can put into practice new ways of dealing with those concerns which seem to be between you and employment."

Responsibilities

The mutual sharing of responsibility for the success of counselling also needs to be explained. Clients need to understand that the counsellor's responsibility is to understand those concerns between the client and his/her successful employment, suggest courses of action, plan strategies with the client to assist him/her to attain the employment-related goal and assist the client to take the first steps towards achieving that goal. The counsellor may also stress that he/she hopes to create a relationship of trust and confidence so the client can discuss freely, explore without fear and practice new ways of approaching and resolving the concerns in a 'safe' environment before trying them out in the work world.

The client's responsibilities also need to be stressed. These are to provide the counsellor with the information he/she needs to assist the client to work towards resolving the employment concern, to carry out the tasks agreed upon and with the counsellor's assistance to make the decisions necessary and to carry them out.

An example would be as follows:

My job is to understand your employment concerns as completely as possible, to assist you in establishing goals, and help you develop and carry out a plan to reach them. In our work together, I will try to provide you with an atmosphere where you will feel free to talk openly with me about your concerns. I'll make every effort to help you in exploring issues more fully and looking at alternative possibilities. Your job will be to help me understand what it is that you are thinking and feeling ... to be as candid as you can. As we work together we may find that you will need to carry out some tasks to learn more about the world of work. This will take determination and persistence on your part, but learning to carry through on these tasks is an important part of our work together.

Focus and Limits

Two final areas are often helpful to clarify with clients and can be done relatively simply and quickly.

Clients bring many concerns to employment counselling, some related directly to employment but frequently intertwined with a variety of personal concerns. It is therefore helpful to let the client know that the focus will be on the employment concerns and that instead of attempting to work on all concerns at once, the focus will be on achieving one specific target at a time.

In addition, the target the client wants to achieve may be achievable after one or two interviews. If so, this is excellent, but if not, the efforts of the counsellor and client will be to have made sufficient progress for the client to continue independently after three to five interviews. In addition, the client may need reassurance that he/she can discuss concerns with you confidentially.

An example of these steps would be as follows:

In employment counselling we usually focus on a specific employment target you want to achieve, then work to reach that target. We may work on several targets before finishing our work together. Furthermore, while we will attempt to make progress on your targets as quickly as possible, we will always be working toward making you more independent in job-seeking. Usually our interviews last at least 15 and not more than 40 minutes but more on that later. Two matters should be kept carefully in mind. First, you are here because you want to be here. If you aren't getting the help that you need, we'll want to discuss that. Second, what we say is between the two of us. I won't be telling anyone else of any confidential matters unless we have both agreed to it in advance.

In phrasing suggested sentences, they will undoubtedly appear to the reader to be very stilted because they lack the conversational element and certainly the warmth which the personality of the individual counsellor will bring. The suggested sentences are intended only to contain the ideas to be conveyed and it is not suggested they be used verbatim. The relationship building process which is ongoing throughout working with an individual client is assumed throughout the Systematic Employment Counselling process and of course must form the foundation of 'how' this type of information is conveyed to a client. Once this information is conveyed, the counsellor is in a position to check what the client knows and does not know about the process in which he/she is engaged.

The responses of clients to open questions such as those listed below may provide the counsellor with important leads on the presence of reluctance:

"How does this procedure strike you?"

"How does this fit with your expectations?"

"I've indicated how I understand what we will work towards. I'd be interested in knowing how you understand what I've explained and if it seems like a useful way to proceed."

"As you can see, our working together will require effort from both of us. How do you see this for you?"

The clarification process involved here may require considerable dialogue between the client and counsellor. For clients whose reluctance is based primarily on fear of the unknown, the time spent on this counselling step is vital and may put the reluctance to rest. For clients whose reluctance is based on more complex issues such as refusal to acknowledge the problem or beating the system, this step constitutes an important beginning because of the emphasis placed on the client's responsibility and control over his/her employment problem resolution. The operating principle is simple: the more counselling is demystified and the more clients feel they are in control of what will happen to them through counselling, the less reluctance is appropriate or necessary for their own self protection.

EXERCISE I

Reluctance of the client to participate fully in counselling can often be reduced or eliminated if the counsellor provides a clearer understanding of the counselling process and their respective roles within that process. List briefly some concepts that you might introduce to make the client more aware of your understanding and practice of counselling.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

Creating Counselling Conditions which Motivate

Clients who are reluctant can also be considered to be unmotivated or motivated in self-defeating ways. Riordan has described reluctance as 'the raw material of motivation'[4] in the sense that reluctance may be an expression of the client's desire to have control over his/her own destiny. The client may resist the counsellor's efforts because these efforts represent giving over control to another. If the motivation to control for its own sake can be positively channelled into the motivation to gain more control through collaborative counselling effort, the need to resist may reduce.

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[4] Riordan, R; Matheny, K; Harris, C. Helping Counsellors Minimize Client Reluctance, Counsellor Education and Supervision, September, 1978, pp. 6-13.

Some understanding of the dynamics of human motivation is necessary. We will touch here on those dynamics of motivation which may have particular relevance to understanding reluctant behaviours in clients.

The Feeling of Powerlessness

One way of looking at and understanding some aspects of human motivation is to examine the dimension of feeling/believing oneself to be relatively powerful or powerless. The use of "relative" is deliberate as all of us have experienced life situations in which we perceived ourselves to be strong, confident, in control and powerful; we have likely also experienced other situations in which we perceived ourselves weak, lacking in confidence and somewhat powerless. One does not face life either powerful or powerless all the time. There is however, according to one theorist on motivation, a tendency to perceive ourselves as usually swaying towards one self-perception or its opposite.

Before proceeding, pause for a moment and reflect on this dimension in yourself. Do you have a tendency to believe that you are in control of your own life, your achievements, successes, failures, that you make them happen and that you can change them to a large extent through your own efforts? Alternately, do you have a tendency to believe that your achievements, successes and failures are largely out of your control and determined by situations, chance, good or bad fortune, other people and unavoidable events?

Julien Rotter and his associates have postulated the concept of internal versus external locus of control of reinforcement which refers to the degree to which individuals perceive themselves as causal agents of their own behaviour. In the Assessment module you were exposed briefly to Rotter's ideas. We return to them here because of their particular application in understanding some dynamics which may apply to reluctant clients. Internal vs. external control can be simplified as follows:

1. We learn through our past reinforcement histories (what was rewarding, what was punishing, what worked well and what worked badly, where we succeeded, where we failed) that control over what happened to us was primarily determined by our own personality and will or that this control was primarily determined by forces outside ourselves such as chance, luck or other people.

2. What we learned in the past affects what we expect in the future - that is, we expect that largely our future is in our own control or largely it is beyond our capability to control.

3. Expectancies may operate in a self-fulfilling manner. The individual who has learned internal control faced with a present situation, will expect to be able to influence the outcome of the situation by his/her own behaviour. This leads to positive attitudes such as 'I think I can' and 'I'll give it a try'. The individual who has learned external control, faced with a present situation, will not expect to influence the outcome to the same degree. This may lead to self-defeating attitudes such as 'It won't work anyway', 'There's no point in trying' or 'There's nothing I can do about it'.

4. Individuals whose past reinforcement histories have included many more failures and disappointments than successes, (that is their attempts to control outcomes of events have been largely unsuccessful) may develop an attitude of helplessness or powerlessness which may result not only in self-defeating attitudes but in a tendency to avoid taking any risks. Since the outcomes are predictable (i.e. repeated failure), taking risks will only repeat the painful process and so it is preferable to be passive. In this sense, it is more rewarding and less painful to do nothing than to act and risk failure.

In considering the application of this model to clients' behaviours, the risk of over-generalizing and making value judgements must be avoided. For example it is not necessarily *better* to be internally or externally controlled. There is some experimental evidence which indicates that individuals who score high on tests of internal control tend to be higher academic achievers. There are also indications that those scoring high on external control tend to be more active in social reform and change. We must also remain conscious of the often negative impact of those individuals who perceive themselves as having abundant power and control not only over themselves but over others. If we avoid such generalizations, this model may provide us with a more compassionate way of viewing reluctance and increase our capacity to work it through in counselling. We described earlier forms of reluctance which included denying problem ownership and blaming the presenting problem on factors external to the self. Rotter's model would suggest that one possible source of this may be in the sense of perceiving oneself as not having power, of having tried repeatedly and failed and of having concluded that not to risk change is safer. The counsellor who can, within counselling, structure with the client *successful outcomes* may begin to break a self-defeating cycle. Individuals who have been habitual failures or perceive themselves in this light may become highly motivated by small successes. Knowing how an individual client sees this aspect of self, as having or not having control and power, may assist us in understanding an important dynamic of reluctant behaviour.

EXERCISE II

1. "Expectancies may operate in a self-fulfilling manner". In terms of Rotter's theory of internal-external locus of control explain:

a) the factors which precede the development of positive and negative expectancies:

Positive	Negative
i)	i)
ii)	ii)
iii)	iii)

b) the behaviours which can be expected from an individual who has developed positive and negative expectancies:

Positive	Negative
i)	i)
ii)	ii)
iii)	iii)

EXERCISE II (continued)

2. Write two client statements which would be indicative of internal control and external control:

   a) Internal: i)

   ii)

   b) External: i)

   ii)

The Need to Achieve

Many researchers have attempted to unravel the sources of the enormous range of individual differences in achievement motivation. Observing in your own work setting, you will undoubtedly be able to identify a broad range of achievement levels. Some co-workers, no matter how hard-working and successful, seem not satisfied and driven to achieve more and more; others equally hard-working and successful seem satisfied; still others appear dissatisfied with their achievements but unmotivated to change the situation. What accounts for these variations in human behaviour is far from fully known. It is clear that there is a constant interchange between characteristics which are internal or intrinsic in the individual and factors which are outside or extrinsic to the individual. The most obvious place to observe this is in infancy and early childhood. The child's need to master his/her environment by learning to manipulate objects, crawl and walk and his/her determination to do so originates within the child. In doing so the child takes enormous risks - falling down stairs, falling up stairs, hurting him/herself, frustration, failure - but continually tries again until the task is mastered. Certainly factors extrinsic to the child such as the parent's praise, encouragement and joy in the victories influence and reinforce the child's efforts thus further motivating him/her to keep trying. The sense of satisfaction and the pride of accomplishment when victory is achieved is experienced by the child him/herself. Every parent has experienced watching his/her child repeat accomplished tasks over and over again, being very proud each time the task is achieved and completely oblivious to being observed by the parent let alone being rewarded and reinforced.

As adults we know the sense of accomplishment felt when we have successfully completed a difficult task (intrinsic). If we are praised and appreciated for our accomplishment (extrinsic) we are encouraged and further motivated. Even in the absence of external praise however, there is the moment in which we feel for ourselves that a task was worth doing and we did it! That is not to say that without ever receiving extrinsic rewards we will continue at the same level of accomplishment. The interplay between the intrinsic need for achievement and the extrinsic need for recognition of achievement is constant and the balance needed to maintain motivated behaviour is highly divergent. Contrast for a moment the pure scientist who labours months and years on a research project with little or no extrinsic reward other than salary but maintains high intrinsic motivation to complete the task with the teacher who, without praise and recognition from students for doing a quality job (extrinsic) begins to lose interest in teaching itself (intrinsic).

Whenever a new task is undertaken, there is risk involved because the outcomes of the new task are not known. We may succeed, fail, quit, persevere, partially succeed, etc. When we commit ourselves to making a decision, changing a behaviour, competing for a promotion, trying something new, the one constant is that we can no longer be certain what will happen. Being uncertain inevitably creates a degree of anxiety. How we perceive and cope with the risk and anxiety will affect not only the level of our achievement but whether we achieve at all.

Atkinson and McClelland (1957)[5] conducted research into the intrinsic motivation in risk taking and achievement behaviour. While their research has been criticized as being too restricted to controlled laboratory settings, some of their findings, are of particular interest in looking at reluctance. They postulated that four factors taken together will be the major determinants of risk-taking achievement behaviour. The first two factors involve the personality of the individual:

a) The level of the individual's need for achievement which was studied in two categories only - a high achievement need or a low achievement need.

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[5] Jung, John. Understanding Human Motivation - a Cognitive Approach MacMillan Publishing Co., N.Y., 1978, pp. 140-161.

b) The level of individual anxiety over failure to achieve - either a low anxiety level or a high anxiety level.

Their hypothesis was that an individual with a high achievement need and low anxiety level would be highly motivated to succeed and would have low motivation to avoid failure. An individual with a low achievement need and a high anxiety level would have low motivation to succeed and high motivation to avoid failure. This concept is interesting as we tend often to think of motivation as a positive force and the absence of this positive force to be simply unmotivated behaviour. Looked at in this perspective, it is clear that motivation is both positive and negative. In this case, the individual's behaviour is not unmotivated but highly motivated in a direction which may be self-defeating.

The second two factors studied involved the nature of the task to be accomplished:

c) The individual's subjective assessment of his/her likelihood of succeeding with the given task.

d) The individual's interest in the task for its own sake.

Taking these four factors together, if the tendency to achieve is stronger than the tendency to avoid, the individual will demonstrate risk-taking achievement behaviours. If the tendency to avoid is stronger than the tendency to achieve, risk-taking achievement behaviour will be at best minimal. To illustrate, stenographic and typing tests are tests of achievement. An almost certain prescription that a client will avoid appearing at testing time would be "I don't care if I succeed; I'm very nervous about being tested - I never perform well in tests; I expect it to be a disaster - I'll probably get 20 words a minute and furthermore I'm not interested." An almost certain prescription that the client will appear at testing time would be "It is important to me that I succeed on this test at the level I know I can do; I'm a little nervous but I'll get over that; I think I can do it; I'm also interested and curious to see what the test is like." These examples are certainly over-simplified and are used as illustrations. In order to risk achievement, individuals do not have to be at peak levels on all factors. Were that the case, few of us might have achieved what we have been able to achieve thus far. Looked at in terms of tendencies however, these factors may provide some insights into why some clients appear ready to set goals, follow a plan of action and risk failure in order to achieve while others appear reluctant to commit themselves to goal achievement. They may further provide some specific areas which may be productive to explore with clients when counselling progress seems blocked.

One final point which these researchers discovered is of particular interest. They had hypothesized that individuals with low anxiety about failure would select the most difficult tasks to challenge their sense of achievement. Such was not the case. The tendency was to select tasks which were moderately difficult, thus ensuring an acceptable degree of challenge but controlling the probability of a successful outcome. They had further hypothesized that individuals with high anxiety about failure would select the easiest tasks, thus minimizing the probability of failure. While this tendency was there, these same individuals chose with almost equal frequency the most difficult task in which failure was almost certain. This would appear on the surface to be contradictory as these tasks would surely increase their anxiety. However, what seems to be most anxiety producing for people who have a strong fear of failure is uncertainty. In selecting very easy tasks, they are almost certain to succeed. In selecting very difficult tasks, they anticipate failure and create no hopes that they will succeed. Thus, the outcome is known and uncertainty is avoided. The tasks which were most avoided were those where the risk of failure was perceived to be high but not certain. In establishing goals and targets to be achieved with reluctant clients, this dynamic may be important to know. How the client perceives his or her chances of achieving the target set and what the risks of not achieving the target are, from the client's point of view, important areas of exploration.

EXERCISE III

1. Atkinson & McLelland attempted to understand what motivates people to take risks and achieve. They identified four factors:

    a) Achievement Need - High/Low
    b) Anxiety over Failure - High/Low
    c) Perceived chance of failure - High/Low
    d) Interest in task - High/Low

EXERCISE III (continued)

i) What combination of the above factors may lead to risk taking behaviour?

____

ii) What combination of factors may lead to avoidance of risk behaviour?

____

2a) Individuals with low anxiety over failure tended to select tasks at what level of difficulty - high, medium or low?

____

b) Individuals with high anxiety over failure tended to select tasks at what level of difficulty - high, medium, or low?

____

c) Very briefly, explain your understanding of why the individuals in (b) selected as they did.

____

____

____

____

EXERCISE III (continued)

d) Explain one possible application of this finding to counselling with reluctant clients.

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Riordan suggests that counsellors who 'understand and can foster conditions associated with high levels of motivation in their counselling practice are in a good position to be successful with reluctant clients'.[6] Now that we have some understanding of motivation, let us look at how these principles can be applied in order to foster productive counselling conditions. Riordan suggests six applied motivation principles which are important in creating these conditions.

1. "Self-determined goals are more motivating than imposed ones. Self-determined goals seem to fit better, to feel more natural. Moreover, if we construct the goals, then we feel the pressure to vouch for their importance by committing ourselves to their attainment. This principle clearly demands the involvement of clients in goal selection."

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[6] Riordan, R. et al., Helping Counsellors Minimize Client Reluctance, Counsellor Education and Supervision, September, 1978, pp. 10-12.

The importance of client ownership of the employment targets was stressed in the preceding chapter. This sense of ownership of the decision to change is vital with reluctant clients.

Attempts to change people based on another's decision of what is good and productive for them merely reinforce reluctant behaviours. In addition to ownership of the target, the client's perceptions of his/her own behaviour as being a major determinant of whether or not the target will be achieved is extremely important. An unspoken client attitude of 'Yes, this is my target, I've decided to work towards this target for myself but I know something will happen which I can't do anything about and I won't make it' will deceive the counsellor into believing progress is being made when it is not and will reinforce the client's sense of 'it's better not to bother trying'.

2. "Behaviour that is intrinsically rewarding is more persistent than behaviour dependent solely on extrinsic rewards. McClelland's research on need achievement shows that successful persons are likely to choose intermediate goals that they are capable of achieving. Perfectionism is often an imagined compensation for perceived inferiority. Perfectionism is sometimes a cop-out, an excuse for not persisting through outward frustrations and self-privations."

As discussed in this chapter, reluctant clients may select goals and targets which are so easy that their achievement will not move the client towards greater control. Alternately they may select targets which they know to be beyond their capacity to achieve, thus ensuring failure and avoiding risk. Assessment of McClelland's factors particularly at the target setting and commitment stage of Systematic Employment Counselling may assist in creating intrinsically motivating experiences for the client, thus reducing the reward which reluctant behaviour is providing the client.

3. "Structure and direction often counteract the demoralizing effects ambiguity has on motivation. Most of us find it difficult to attack complicated, ambiguous assignments. Confronted with such tasks we sense that, 'You can't get there from here'. Counselling that uses complicated language and helping schemes tends to lessen the will to change. Clients who have experienced a great deal of failure are particulary vulnerable to the crippling effects of ambiguity."

This particular motivation principle supports the benefits of a Systematic Employment Counselling process when working with reluctant clients, precisely because of the structure, direction and lack of ambiguity in the process itself.

4. "Success in one area often motivates change in other areas of a person's life. The chief roadblock to personal change is often a pervasive sense of powerlessness and helplessness (Rotter, Seligman). Effecting change in any area lessens the feeling of helplessness and arouses interest in further change. Consequently, it is important to encourage the client to start the change process by attacking relatively small assignments that may be

accomplished easily. As some small success is experienced, the counsellor can help the client to celebrate these accomplishments and thereby add to their significance."

5. "The need to behave in ways that are compatible with what we say we believe is highly motivating. Human beings need to achieve congruence among their attitudes and behaviours" - (that is, we need to practice what we preach. When what we say we will do is consistent with what we actually do, we experience congruence).

If the reluctant client believes nothing productive will come from counselling, his/her behaviour may ensure that in fact nothing productive will come. If the client owns the target set and perceives him/herself as having control over its achievement the stage is set for reversing this belief. Methods which can assist include making the commitment to change concrete. The use of written contracts which state that I will do what I say I will do is motivating. Encouraging the client to tell others of his/her decision to achieve a specific target furthers his/her commitment as does keeping a written record of his/her achievement progress.

6. "Rewarding a behaviour is generally more effective than punishing its opposite. The effect of punishing a behaviour is often merely to suppress it. After the threat of punishment is removed, the old behaviour often returns. Moreover, the side effects of punishment are unfortunate. Chronic punishment breeds aggression, an injured self-image, and a desire

to escape the punisher. The counsellor is well advised to treat clients with generous amounts of praise and affection rather than be guarded and cool out of fear of seeming phony or saccharine."

The counsellor must of course guard against false praise. Clients who have experienced repeated failure are likely unaccustomed to receiving praise, suspicious of praise and highly sensitive when it is artificial. The achievement of real success however, albeit a small step, is deserving of praise and if given genuinely can be motivating. The type of process outlined in the previous chapter which includes breaking employment targets into achievable small units and planning for their achievement structures opportunities to provide genuine praise and encouragement as each step is accomplished.

EXERCISE IV

Counsellors who know how to apply principles of motivation within their counselling practice are in a better position to work effectively with reluctant clients. List briefly some tasks or concepts you would introduce to your counselling to help motivate reluctant clients.

a)
b)
c)
d)
e)
f)

Counselling Steps and Techniques

The focus of this chapter has so far been on understanding sources of reluctance and on creating counselling conditions which will work towards minimizing the need of clients to be reluctant. Counsellors who can create conditions where reluctance becomes unnecessary and inappropriate may find that reluctant behaviour will gradually diminish. This may occur without having to deal with reluctance directly.

Such, however, is not always the case. With some clients it will be necessary to focus directly on the reluctant behaviour in order to create the possibility for counselling to proceed productively.

How to do this and how to proceed?

We propose the following four step strategy as a guide to assist with this process.

1. Identify and acknowledge reluctance. Clearly without sensing and knowing that reluctant behaviour is present and interfering, one can do nothing about it. This step is usually not difficult for practicing counsellors. At one or both levels of the counselling process, the relationship level and the action level, there is the sense, often intuitive, that the process is blocking. At the relationship level, the sense is that the client is blocking involvement with the counsellor as a helping person; at the action level, the sense is that

the client is resisting commitment to act. This may occur at any phase of counselling but is most likely to be obvious during the assessment component, the setting of specific targets to be achieved, contracting for change and taking the first step of the action plan.

In identifying reluctance, counsellors must avoid taking the reluctance onto themselves. That is, one must avoid feeling the client is reluctant because one is not a good counsellor. Vriend and Dyer (1975) make the following points which are well worth noting:

"When confronted by reluctant clients, counsellors are often ineffective in establishing a productive relationship and in setting and achieving counselling goals. Such ineptitude has many causes but a predominant one is that counsellors often are inclined to project the client's reluctance onto themselves personally and thereby feel rejected. Apparent hostility, silence, or other manifestations of unwillingness immediately are interpreted as devaluation of the counsellor as an individual. The counsellor's thinking follows this peculiar form of internal logic: 'My client is not cooperating. He's rejecting me. He doesn't like me. There must be something wrong with me. I'm doing everything I can to establish rapport and be warm and accepting, but he's not buying it. He can't relate to me. I'm probably not the right kind of person. Such errors in thinking stem from the inability of the counsellor to accept his/her client as he/she presents him/herself, thereby allowing his/her client to be reluctant. This involves having a set of expectations for clients that when not fulfilled represent disappointment. To the extent that the counsellor is unable or unwilling to accept a reluctant client and his/her behaviours as belonging to him/her without declaring either the client or him/herself persona non grata, the counsellor probably will experience frustration and failure in his/her helping efforts.

Many counsellors harried by time and the pressures of an institutional existence display obvious impatience with uncooperative clients. The impatience often signifies an unwillingness to accept the client or an inability to understand him/her in his/her present involuntary status. Many counsellors ignore the immediacy of the reluctance, becoming in turn reluctant themselves to identify what is happening in the relationship, avoiding mentioning the resistance or pretending it doesn't exist. The impatient counsellor commonly becomes irritated at his/her clients, and such slightly veiled anger is communicated through body language and other clues when the client won't agree to do what the counsellor insists is necessary in order to get straightened out."

Once reluctance is identified, the counsellor must look to his/her own reactions and avoid placing self-defeating and inappropriate responsibility and blame onto him/herself.

In acknowledging the counsellor's perception of reluctance to the client, the counsellor is accomplishing several things. Again, Vriend and Dyer make the following points:[7]

"Dealing with the reluctant behaviour as it is manifested, rather than ignoring it, communicates to the client that (a) his/her feelings are acknowledged and understood, (b) counselling is not a process that pretends that feelings do not exist, (c) counselling does not avoid feelings, (d) the counsellor has an integrated personality and is strong enough to handle resistance in any form without being personally threatened, (e) by looking at the client and his/her behaviour openly and directly the counsellor is full of attention and respect for the importance of what is going on in him/her and his/her world, and (f) the counsellor is capable of avoiding moralization by showing the client that he/she is entitled to his/her behaviour, even when it is antisocial, ineffective, and does not have the impact it was generated to produce."

The counselling technique of immediacy is useful in acknowledging the presence of reluctance with clients. Immediacy, you will recall, requires that the counsellor: a) recognize that some unspoken feeling is in the way of counselling progress and b) acknowledge this to the client being as specific as possible and staying in the here and now. For example:

(1) "I sense you are feeling uncertain about whether you want to continue".

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[7] Dyer, W., Vriend, J. Counselling the Reluctant Client. Journal of Counselling Psychology. Volume 20, Number 2, pp. 240-246

(2) "You are feeling uncomfortable about being here and would like to leave".

(3) "You feel discouraged faced with so many steps to accomplish."

(4) "You seem angry when I discuss your responsibility in this contract."

Note that in using immediacy, one does not try to interpret the reasons for the client's reluctance. Reluctance, as we have seen, may stem from sources as simple as not knowing, to those as complex as repeated failure and negative self-perceptions. While it is important that you have understanding of this, your concern is the reluctant behaviour insofar as it is interfering with achieving the employment target set with the client. Your concern is the here and now behaviour and its effects on target achievement. It is therefore important that the client know that you recognize the reluctance, you accept the client being reluctant and that this is right now affecting the achievement of goals and targets. While it is preferable for counselling progress that the client respond by clarifying what it is that he/she feels so it may be dealt with directly, reluctant clients may deny the counsellor's perception. If so, the process continues as the important message of letting the client know that you are aware of his/her reluctance has been communicated.

2. Involve the client in re-assessing the goal and targets. Several things are accomplished by re-assessing goals and targets with the client:

- The strong message is conveyed that while reluctance is recognized and accepted, the counsellor is willing and committed to work with the client.

- It is reinforced that counselling is goal-directed and that in order for counselling to be productive, the established goals must belong to the client and he/she must feel a collaborative responsibility in their achievement.
- The direction of counselling is within the client's power to control. If the targets no longer seem attainable or desirable for the client, new work will begin on re-defining them until they are.
- The counsellor will not, indeed cannot, make this decision without the client.

The counsellor might, for example, indicate to the client that a possible reason for not making progress and feeling uncomfortable may be that the targets established are not really those the client wants to or feels ready to work on. The counsellor and client would then proceed by re-examining each target with the emphasis on involving the client in stating (a) how he/she feels about the target and (b) how willing he/she is to assume responsibility for making an effort towards achievement of the target.

This step may of course have several results:

- through clarification, the targets may remain as they were but with renewed collaboration and commitment.
- the contract may be re-written.
- the client may accept the targets but not the responsibility - i.e. "That's what I want but I can't see myself achieving it."

The counselling goal at this step is to confirm that the client perceives:

(a) that the problem is (at least partly) one of personal decision or choice, and

(b) the need for personal ownership of responsibility to work for solution/decision.

If the client confirms the above, the reluctance may cease to block counselling progress.

3. Involve the client in looking at risk. Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the fear of taking risks as being a potent factor in many forms of reluctant behaviour. The client statement above, 'That's what I want but I can't see myself achieving it' may mean for the client that the targets seem unrealistic for him/her or may mean that he/she is fearful to try in case it doesn't work. One of the interesting aspects of risk is that we often tend to think of the risks involved in doing something but seldom consider the risks involved in not doing something.

In this step we are suggesting that if reluctance is still blocking the counselling process, it may be productive to assist the client in looking at both aspects of risk.

This involves assisting the client to explore the following dimensions:

a) How satisfied/dissatisfied am I with my employment situation now?

b) What are the risks to me if I work on achieving these targets?

c) What are the risks to me if I don't work on achieving these targets?

and finally

d) Is it realistic for me to hope to achieve these targets?

Obviously these questions are not asked directly in this form to the client and are explored in the context of an established relationship of respect. Many clients, particularly reluctant clients, can gain an important insight when they recognize that there is not only risk in changing - there is risk in not changing.

The example which follows uses a variation of brainstorming in order to assist clients to examine the risks to change.

EXAMPLE

> Many clients have great difficulty in assuming the risk of change. In conversing with you, the client may think of as many reasons for not changing as there are for changing, and change always involves the risk of the unknown. However, some reasons may be much more important than are others. This exercise is designed to help you sort out the consequences of changing and not changing and the comparative weights behind each consequence.
>
> To implement this brainstorming technique help a client to explore a wide variety of consequences (both positive and negative) that might result from change. Record each consequence that you and he/she can think of. You may want the client to continue working on this list between sessions. When the list is complete, then ask the client

to assign weights to each consequence. A "5" would be given if a consequence were likely to give great reward or great risk. A "1" would be assigned if the reward or risk was minimal. When each consequence has been assigned a weight, then total both columns. Discuss the results with the client.

+ CONSEQUENCE	WEIGHT	− CONSEQUENCE	WEIGHT
TOTAL		TOTAL	

4. The Use of Confrontation. When you have passed through the previous three steps and the client still is reluctant to move forward into responsible problem resolution, it may be necessary to (gently) confront the client with the situation.

A three-stage model of confrontation follows:

1. Step one is a paraphrase of the client's perception (opinion, thought, etc.), to show that you accurately understand his/her position.
2. Step two requires that the counsellor take the initiative away from the client by telling the client how he/she (the counsellor) perceives the client's opinions, behaviours, etc., to appear discrepant.
3. In the third step, the counsellor gives the initiative back to the client who can accept or reject the confrontation. The open- ended question is designed to elicit a problem-solving attitude from the client. All three steps are extremely important in achieving the goal of confrontation which is to facilitate the client's awareness of discrepancies in his/her behaviour. When a step is omitted, the result may be an unproductive client-counsellor confrontation.

A productive illustration would be as follows:

Counsellor: As I understand it, you feel that the two targets we have set are what you want for yourself and that while it is risky you are prepared to begin to work on the two action we discussed. (paraphrase of previous client response)

Client: Yes, that's right. It's risky but I want to do it. (confirms).

Counsellor: On the one hand, you say you feel the targets are right and you are ready to work. On the other hand, each time we begin to work on the action plan, you indicate it won't work and want to know if there is an easier way.
It seems to me that what you are saying you want to do and what you are doing contradict each other. (States the discrepancy)
What do you think of what I've just said? (Ask open-ended question, giving initiative back to the client and prompting a problem solving attitude.)

The results of using gentle confrontation selectively may be very productive. It may prompt the client to recognize his/her behaviour and to assume new responsibility and control, a necessary condition for problem resolution.[8]

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8. Peavy, Vance. Research Notes on Decision Counselling: a paper prepared for the Occupational & Career Analysis & Development Branch, CEIC, 1980.

Reluctant Clients who Try Hard - and Fail

A discouraging and disheartening moment occurs in counselling when a client has feared failure, has decided there is greater risk in not trying than in trying, has sincerely tried - and fails. An employer isn't interested; his/her interview performance was poor; no training seat was available; his/her grades didn't meet the necessary standards, etc. The client has been reinforced in the old belief, "See what I mean - I know I'd fail; I knew it wouldn't work out - there's no point trying." As a counsellor, what do you do now? You want to keep your client on the productive track of trying; you need to find a way to reinforce the clients effort and reduce the negative reinforcement he/she has just received; platitudes like 'Rome wasn't built in a day' race through your head but you know if you use one now you may lose much of what has been accomplished. While not wishing to over dramatize, this is a sensitive and difficult issue for counsellors to deal with effectively. The following steps are suggested for your reflection and use:

1. Provide support and understand.
2. Identify some success - however small - amid the failure reported. Reinforce this.
3. Carefully assess all elements of the client's attempts to succeed and pinpoint the precise reasons that failure occurred. Failure may have had nothing to do with the client's effort but with a situation. If this is so, discuss and clarify it.

4. Accept freely your share of the blame for the failure's occurrence and make certain the client understands your willingness to acknowledge your fault. Be certain, however, that you don't accept more-or less-blame than is properly yours. It is possible for example that you thought the client was better prepared than he/she was; that the target was too demanding; that you forgot to discuss a very important factor etc.
5. Candidly and openly discuss the advantages of renewed - or new - action rather than dwelling upon what has happened.
6. Set a realistic, attainable target if the previous target was unrealistic in the light of the client's experience.
7. Adjust the strategy elements so that failure is not repeated. This may well include shorter report-in periods, smaller increments between steps, and an "early detection" system so that difficulty can be pinpointed before the client again experiences failure.
8. Better control over client experiences may be needed with safe simulations/modelling/practice preparing the client for the realities of the employment market.
9. The length of the intervention - that is, the length of the time the client works closely with you may need to be lengthened, as well as the monitoring period.
10. Counsellor focus in all the above steps should be upon the possible and the positive evidence of client effort, motivation, and success already experienced.

Points 7-10 above will be more clearly understood (in terms of how to do them) when you have completed the chapters on Strategies, particularly the Motivation Strategy contained in the Learning Chapter. We will therefore be returning to their application. Point 1-6 should feel comfortable having completed the Targets Chapter as well as this one.

When All Else Fails

We began this chapter by discussing that there are no magic recipes for working with reluctant clients. We have discussed counselling conditions which assist and a specific strategy which may prove very useful with a large portion of reluctant clients. In all counselling settings, forms of reluctant behaviours which are very subtle and deceiving are encountered and these are extremely difficult even for the most skilled practitioner to resolve. For some clients, the risks involved in giving up reluctance and moving toward change are simply too great and the rewards of remaining with the status quo too powerful to be abandoned. The responsibility of counsellors is to attempt to find the resources to motivate the client to assume increased responsibility and accomplish the desired counselling targets. Riordan cites, among several counselling myths, two myths which are helpful to remember when all else fails:[9]

1. Every client can be helped, or its opposite, no unwilling client can be helped. Operating at either extreme is not only frustrating - it is false.

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[9] Riordan et al. Helping Counsellors Minimize Client Reluctance. Counsellor Education and Supervision, September, 1978, p. 12.

2. I alone am responsible for what happens with this client. With reluctant clients, it is often essential to get assistance. In addition, the counsellor alone does not bear the responsibility for counselling outcomes. The counsellor has the responsibility to seek the resources. The client has the responsibility to change.

EXERCISE V

As indicated throughout the chapter, reluctance takes many forms and for many reasons. Think about each of the following clients that you might be working with and then suggest brief ideas as to how you would proceed in each instance.

1. You have worked with John for four weeks. Both you and he clearly understand the type of job he is seeking and you both know that many jobs of this type are currently available. However, he reports each week that he has made no attempt to follow through on the contacts you have arranged. You are certain he understands the situation, yet he shows little indication of altering this procrastination by getting started.

EXERCISE V (continued)

Some steps you would now take:

a.

b.

c.

d.

2. Sylvia is now in her third weekly meeting with you. A specific employment target was established in the first session. However, Sylvia has since shown great apathy concerning getting started in working toward that target. You know that she understands what the target is that she has no fear of failure, and that she is ambitious by nature.

Some steps you would take:

a.

b.

c.

d.

EXERCISE V (continued)

3. This is Brent's first meeting with you. You learned of his concern and started to establish an employment target. However, he now seems rather reluctant to participate and his responses are very soft and brief. You doubt that you have said anything to offend him and strongly believe he sees the necessity for establishing targets.

   Some steps you would take:

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

4. Marcia has worked with you for nearly five weeks, although not every week. She has tried very hard to complete each task, yet has faced failure repeatedly. One job was just filled, another employer rejected her without reason, and a third had her come back three

EXERCISE V (continued)

times before saying that they had decided not to fill the position. Marcia is now sitting before you in tears and doesn't know what do do.

Some steps you would take:

a.

b.

c.

d.

Summary

Reluctance, in a counselling setting, is an unwillingness on the part of a client to co-operate with a counsellor in order to achieve employment goals. Such reluctance, as we have seen is often an expression of fear - fear of the unfamiliar, of acknowledging and owning the problem, of the power of the system and/or of having to give up some related or unrelated gain. Reluctance is extremely common among clients in all counselling settings and is a constant challenge to counsellors to handle well.

Three major methods of dealing effectively with reluctance were covered. The first involved creating counselling conditions of safety and clarity within which the client will feel more free to risk. The second involved creating counselling conditions which motivate. These conditions are based on understanding that motivation to achieve counselling goals may be to some extent dependent on factors such as a client's need to achieve and anxiety about failing and a client's interest and perceived chances of success. The third involved a four-step strategy to be attempted when the right conditions above have not achieved the goal. Finally, we discussed the difficult situation in which a reluctant client tries hard but fails, and what you, as a counsellor, can attempt to do to continue to motivate your client.

Chapter 4

Strategy Implementation

Overview

Now that you are becoming more familiar with what Systematic Employment Counselling involves, you are in a much better position to see how our model encourages concrete client movement towards problem resolution. Let's pause for a moment to reflect on the progress you have made within the counselling process up to this point. Along with developing a facilitative relationship with your client, you began the employment counselling process by helping your client to tell "his/her story". Next, constructing a model of client concerns by working through complaint and constraint statements provided you with more in depth knowledge of your client's past and present behaviour with regard to the selected concern. This added knowledge allowed you and your client to move towards problem resolution through the subsequent formulation of a counselling goal expressed as a contingency situation. With the establishment of a counselling goal and, where necessary, appropriate employment targets, client behaviour to be achieved before counselling is terminated has been identified. You have begun to play an instrumental role in sending your client on the road towards problem resolution. Fine! you say, but what happens now? Surely there is a big difference between a client's present behaviour and what he/she would ultimately like to be doing. What's next? At this moment, it may seem that a great distance exists between your client's present and desired behaviours. Your next task is to introduce the process that will bridge this gap. The process for effecting this change is called a strategy.

This chapter presents an overview of the process steps taken in implementing a strategy as well as further information on how to formulate a contract for client learning and behaviour change.

Objectives

This chapter is designed to provide you with knowledge and skills for implementing strategies and formulating contracts for client learning and behaviour change. Upon successful completion of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Provide a definition of strategy, step, checkpoint, recycle and sequenced learning.
2. With the aid of a diagram, list the 6 systematic steps included within the subsystem "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY".
3. Discuss the utility of sequenced learning within the helping process.
4. Given a case description, outline the steps you might suggest to help a client improve his/her information-seeking skills.
5. Demonstrate how a contract for client learning and behaviour change is set up and provide all the relevant information required.
6. Sequence given learning activities in accordance with sequenced learning principles.

What is a Strategy?

Strategies are plans of action tailored to meet specific counselling goals or employment targets. In a nutshell, they represent a procedural plan to help get a client from point A (present behaviour) to point B (desired behaviour). When we think of learning to drive a car, competing for a promotion, or taking a trip to Europe this summer, we know that a great many small steps are necessary to complete each part of the task and that the completion of each part is essential to reaching our goal. Much the same process is involved in developing a counselling strategy. Using the trip to Europe as an analogy, we originally plan to "just go to Europe and have a good time." We then learn that many challenges face us in our preparation for the trip. One phase might be termed "making transportation arrangements", another "customs and legal requirements," and another "making arrangements for care of house and pets." We already have several target behaviours identified, and we haven't even left! Thus, we have as a goal, "taking a trip to Europe this summer," and have identified several smaller targets that will be necessary to complete if we are to make the trip at all. Further, we can immediately realize that "customs and legal requirements" is only a statement of intent. To do this we will need to complete a great many small, specific steps such as having pictures taken for passports, applying for passports, applying for an international driver's license, and so on.

A similar process is involved in employment counselling. We start with an employment target and develop a comprehensive strategy or plan that will take our clients from their present circumstances to where they wish to be at the end of counselling. Similar to planning the trip to Europe, this includes identifying the necessary targets, and then selecting the steps and specific actions necessary to reach them. In Systematic Employment Counselling, the subsystem "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY" addresses action plans and as such it represents the core of the Systematic Employment Counselling process. Any change that is to take place, any decision that is to be made, any knowledge that is to be gained will most likely occur as the result of the client and counsellor's efforts in this phase of the counselling process. For this reason, it is likely that this stage will take more time than all of the other stages combined. Another point should be stressed. Unlike the other subsystems within the Systematic Employment Counselling model, which are designed to be performed with comparative uniformity from client to client and from concern to concern, IMPLEMENT STRATEGY will differ greatly in both time (number and length of interviews) and tasks (client assignments during and between interviews). A client's learning rate, the complexity of the concern, and the strategy selected all contribute to this great diversity in time and tasks.

Steps within Implement Strategy

Before we take a look at the specific steps to guide you through the completion of the IMPLEMENT STRATEGY stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling model, let us begin by reviewing those questions that must be dealt with in order to ensure continued, productive counselling movement.

1. Having helped my client express his/her needs in terms of an employment target that is realistic and achievable within the context of employment counselling, do I possess the necessary skills for working on a strategy that will help him/her to attain the agreed-upon target?

   If I judged myself not to be the best individual to provide assistance, did I take an appropriate course of action such as referral to another person or agency?

2. Knowing my client's employment difficulty and having arrived at a mutually agreed upon employment target, have I selected an appropriate action plan to help my client get to where he/she wants to be?

3. Was the strategy adequately developed?
   Did I provide my client with an explanation of the process involved and what was expected of him/her?

Was my client involved in strategy development?

Did my client have a clear understanding of the overall strategy?

Was the strategy adapted to meet my client's needs?

4. Were the action steps to be taken well thought out?

Were the steps clear?

Was the responsibility for performing each step ... counsellor - client... or other decided?

Were all steps possible for my client to achieve?

Were all steps likely to lead to attainment of the agreed upon employment target?

5. Did I actively involve my client in the process?

Were his/her ideas asked for and respected?

Were alternatives presented when appropriate?

6. Did I pause to mentally recall whether all steps of this stage have been covered as planned?

Figure 3 graphically represents the sequence of steps covered by the 6 questions provided above and included within the IMPLEMENT STRATEGY stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling model.

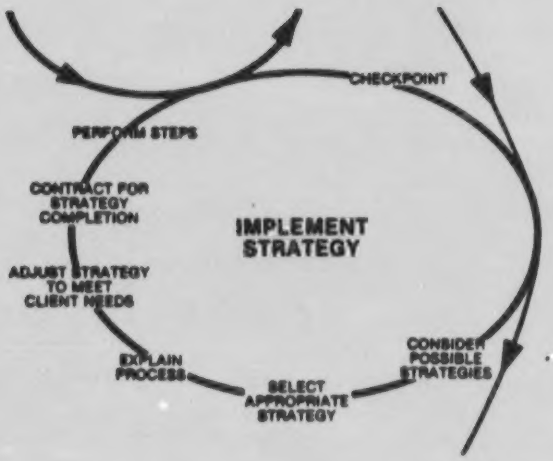

CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Figure 3. Sequence of Steps in Implement Strategy.

In addition to the consideration and selection of the most appropriate strategy, explanation of the steps to be followed, adaptation of the chosen strategy to meet your client's need and contracting for strategy completion, provision is made for both you and your client to perform the steps that each of you has been assigned. Further, as was the case in DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET, a checkpoint step is provided to help you determine whether the strategy/steps have been completed. If either the strategy is incomplete or the steps have not been completed, you would then recycle to review those steps that have been accomplished and proceed from there to the completion of the strategy. Returning to our client, Jim, we have come as far as writing a partial contract which as you will remember from Chapter 2 reads as follows:

CONTRACT BETWEEN MR. BERNARD AND JIM

STARTING DATE: October 30, 1981

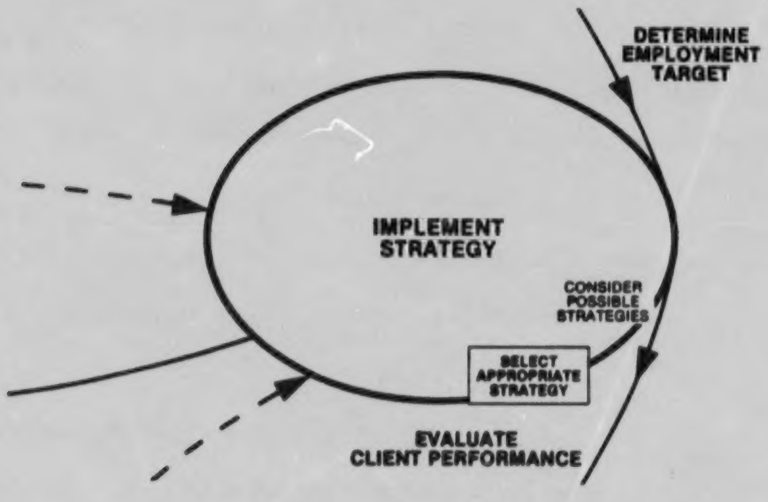
Counselling Goal: To practice and learn job interview skills.

Employment Target: To practice and learn 5 specific job interview skills so well that I obtain 3 job interviews in the repair field on my own initiative and to aim towards achieving this within 3 weeks.

Now suppose we have worked out a series of action steps with Jim that will enable him to achieve the employment target. However, a week later, Jim reports back to you that he was unable to carry through on the agreed-upon action plan because some of the steps were just too difficult for him. More specifically Jim explains that he thinks he has progressed well in practicing and learning job interview skills but indicates that he is finding it hard to obtain the 3 job interviews. The next step then would be to review the specific steps creating the difficulty and make some adjustments so that this difficulty could be reduced. For example, since job interview skills are the core issue in Jim's case, it may be more feasible for Jim to try out his interview skills during 2 interviews prearranged by the counsellor and only 1 interview arranged by himself. Jim would then be able to attain the step without losing motivation. Enough said! We shall elaborate on Jim's case later in this chapter.

Returning again to Figure 3 we will now examine each step within IMPLEMENT STRATEGY in more detail.

1. Consider Possible Strategies and Select Appropriate Strategy


DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

The choice of strategy that is appropriate for a given purpose is dependent upon the specific needs of your client and your skills as a counsellor.

Having developed the model of client concerns and established an employment target, both you and your client can readily determine the change that is desired. You as a counsellor must assume some responsibility for selecting strategies that reflect the nature of the problem behaviours and the desired outcomes. Of course, this requires thorough problem and goal definition and thus our previous emphasis on goal delineation and establishing employment targets. To put it more bluntly... if you select a strategy before establishing employment targets, you may be barking up the wrong tree! Because a strategy is a way to reach goals, clearly specified targets are a prerequisite to strategy selection.

You must also take your own skills into account when judging which strategy will be most appropriate. Your previous use of a procedure and your attitudes about it are major factors affecting your preferences. We are sure that each of you has developed numerous approaches to help clients resolve their employment difficulties and achieve satisfactory placement. After all you have been doing that for some time and with considerable success. In this text we will present several strategies to assist clients. Some may not be new to you. You may react by saying "I do that now - I just never called it a strategy". Others may not be new, and learning to be comfortable with new strategies takes time and practice. Those of you who have followed the course in "Using Tests in Employment Counselling" now have a strategy for interpreting tests accurately and effectively with clients. Undoubtedly it took some time to feel comfortable with the steps of that strategy. Similarly you now have a ten-step strategy for conducting an effective assessment interview and may be just beginning to feel fully at ease with its flow.

In this chapter, in addition to covering the steps involved in implementing any strategy, we will introduce you to two relatively simple strategies. The first involves helping clients to obtain and use information; the second focusses on sequenced learning, a technique to assist clients to learn which can be applied on its own as well as with other more complex strategies.

In the following three chapters, we will introduce three more complex strategies. These strategies have been chosen with attention to those client employment difficulties which are most frequently presented to employment counsellors as well as those difficulties employment counsellors can be expected to work with most effectively.

The first major strategy is Decision-Making. For many clients the process of finding and selecting employment is a process of making decisions - discovering alternatives, weighing advantages, determining costs and benefits to themselves and choosing an alternative which provides the most benefit at the least cost. For many clients requiring employment counselling, their difficulties stem from not being able to choose among the options available or perceiving themselves as having limited if any options.

The second major strategy is a Learning Strategy focused on acquiring minimum competencies for employment. This strategy presumes that many clients face employment difficulties because of learning deficits within their own backgrounds in one or a combination of the following areas:

- learning skills directly related to finding and keeping employment
- learning productive work-related habits such as the ability to get to work on time and to persist at a task until it is completed
- learning increased motivation necessary to find and maintain employment

The third major strategy is again primarily a learning strategy focused on teaching clients to help themselves and is called a Self-Management Strategy. It is a special application of the strategies already discussed to prepare clients to become more self-directed, to do those things which are goal directed and to eliminate or reduce habitual behaviours which may be immediately rewarding but are in the long run self-defeating in terms of employment.

There is an understandable tendency to cling to the single strategy or small number of strategies with which one feels competent and not to experiment with new and challenging strategies. Knowing several possible means of effecting change increases the likelihood that you will be able to draw upon a variety of strategies that will help a given client. Developing a strategy repertoire requires openness and experimentation.

Continuing with our example of Jim, notice how the idea of strategies has been introduced:

Counsellor: The other day, Jim, we talked about some of the things you would like to accomplish by the end of counselling. One of the things you thought was pretty important to you was learning how to do better in a job interview. I'd like to suggest several things you might try to improve your job interview skills. These are all action plans I've used with other clients, and I feel that they work quite well based on my experience with them. All are things we can do together to help you get to where you want to be. How does that sound?

Client : Sounds great! So maybe we'll find a way I can avoid flubbing interviews. Yeah, sounds super to me!

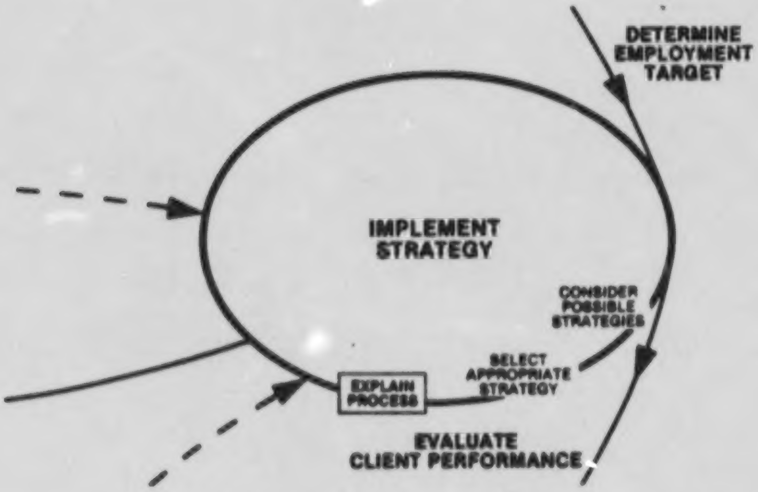
In just several sentences, the counsellor has summarized the previous session and has introduced Jim to the idea of exploring strategies. In the example below the counsellor attempts to explain to Jim what strategy selection involves and the importance of his input.

Counsellor: One thing to remember, Jim, is that there are many approaches we can use to help you develop your job interview skills. What we can do today is explore some ways that are used to help people feel less nervous in job interviews and try to decide on a way that you think sounds workable for you. If you want, I can give you some information about these procedures and you can begin to decide what sounds best.

Client : That's OK by me.

As you can see from the above example, the choice of appropriate counselling strategies does not rest only with the counsellor. We view it as a mutual decision in which both counsellor and client are actively involved. In order to help the client make an informed commitment, the counsellor should provide the client with pertinent information about the strategy(ies) being considered. Usually the client's participation is only strengthened when the client has an understanding of what is going on. Without an explanation, a client might feel threatened and decide to drop out of the employment counselling process. (Recall the reluctant client from Chapter 3)

2. Explain Process


DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Without soliciting client input you may end up with a strategy that a client cannot or will not use. For this reason EXPLAIN PROCESS is a vital step within our IMPLEMENT STRATEGY subsystem. Should a client query your strategy explanation, more elaboration is in order. If you do not have the information sought by the client, simply saying, "I don't know" is of more assistance to the client than saying nothing. In the latter instance, a client may detect your uncertainty anyway and this ambiguity may create anxiety.

At this point in the employment counselling process, the client should be provided with:

(a) a description of the strategy and its purpose,

(b) a rationale for the approach,

(c) the possible consequences (benefits and costs) of the approach, and

(d) the activities involved.

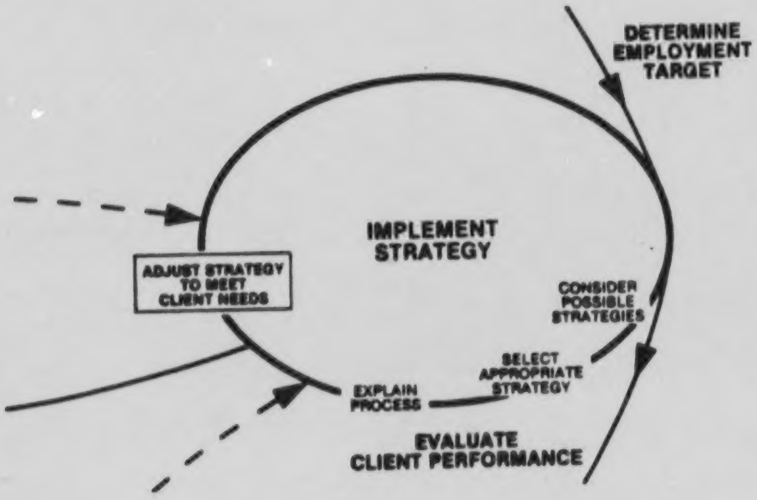
The client should be helped to assess the benefits and costs involved in any approach in order that both of you end up with the strategy that is most likely to maximize benefits and minimize costs. The amount of time you have to spend with each client for each session and for the entire employment counselling process is one cost to take into consideration. In time-limited counselling, specific, concrete approaches that are easy to work with are more practical.

Back to our friend, Jim. Here the counsellor gives Jim some information about the time involved in carrying out the agreed upon strategy:

Counsellor: Another thing I should point out to you, Jim, before we move on is that what we have just discussed in terms of helping you develop your job interview skills will require some of your free time. But, then again, keep in mind that any change plan takes some time. Now in this case, you will be expected to practice various job interview skills on your own once or twice a day. How does this sound to you?

Client : Sure, as long as they are things I can do at home. In fact, that's no problem at all since my roommate will be away for the next little while, so I'll have the apartment to myself.

3. Adjust Strategy to meet Client Need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CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Obviously, if a strategy is to be successful, it should suit the client for which it is intended. Egan (1975) suggests that a counsellor should help the client choose an action plan that is consistent with the client's values and lifestyle. If a strategy runs counter to a client's values or lifestyle, his/her investment in the strategy may be minimal, or the use of a plan may create further problems.

Strategies may require some adaptation because of the client's environment. Egan (1975) points out that an action plan that occurs in an unyielding environment or that meets with a lot of resistance is not a practical one.

For example, it is not helpful to depend on an action plan that requires a great deal of encouragement from significant others if the client has very few close relationships.

Note how the counsellor guides Jim's decision about strategies based on Jim's preferences:

Counsellor: OK, Jim. Why don't we review the action plans I've explained to you and go over them once more, to see which one you feel you would be most comfortable with, at least for the time being. Remember, we can always change at a later point if you want to. Does that sound fair?

Client : Sure. It seems you have given me so much information. I don't know if I've remembered all the things you've told me.

Counsellor: OK. Let's review them. First of all we talked about...

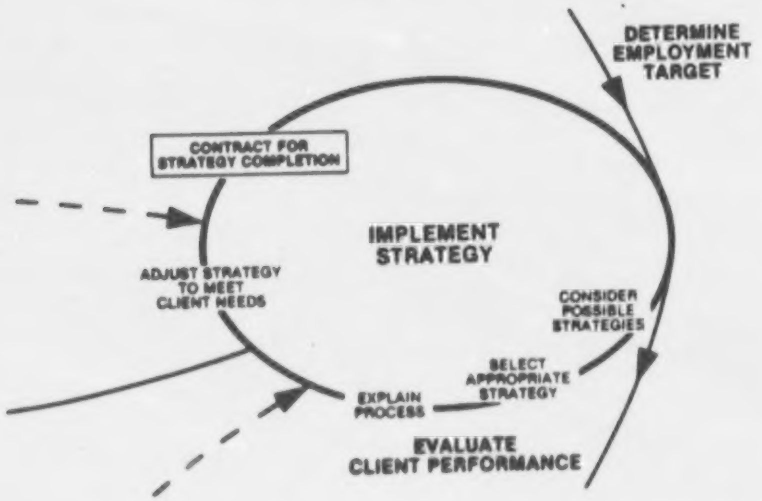
Then we discussed...

The third plan...

What do you feel would benefit you the most at this point?

Client : I think maybe the film would be best for me now. Then I can practice what I've seen at home.

4. Contract for Strategy Completion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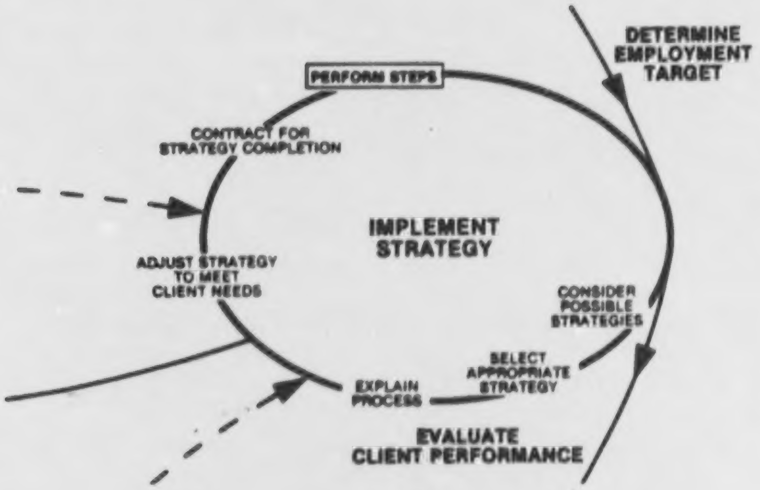
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Employment targets are designed to provide a client with direction. We are now selecting those steps that will help a client attain the employment target. The term step is used here to designate a specific task that the client can do in order to reach the established employment target. Some steps that might be taken by a client seeking employment are: go to the library tomorrow and look through those publications that provide information concerning broadcasting, look through the newspapers and make a list of potential employers, contact friends and relatives to inquire if they know of any potential job openings, read help-wanted ads on a daily basis, visit possible places for employment and arrange to go for a job interview. Obviously, as you and your client consider how the employment target might be achieved, a great many steps may be generated. In those instances where it seems necessary to accomplish one before attempting another it may be beneficial to order the steps. In this process of sifting and sorting, some steps may seem too large and may need to be divided into two or more specific acts. As work on the steps continues, the client may give evidence that some steps can be skipped.

We will be taking a closer look at writing steps in a contract format later in this chapter.

5. Perform Steps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EXPLAIN PROCESS
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Much time has by now been spent by you and your client in coming up with the steps that your client will undertake in gradually moving toward his/her employment target. Finally, you and your client can begin to do something. While much of the doing will be the responsibility of your client, you may also be involved in the doing process. Coming back to Jim, although most of his steps would centre around learning and practising job interview skills, some of the steps might involve providing roleplay situations and prearranging job interviews for him. Thus, both you and your client may perform the steps. Assignment of who is to do what is accomplished during the planning process

CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION. As arduous as the planning process might seem, PERFORM STEPS is the single function within Systematic Employment Counselling that produces behaviour change. All of the other functions are involved with planning and assessing outcomes. It is only logical, then, that the greatest time commitment of a counsellor and client be given to this vital function.

6. Checkpoint

As steps are completed satisfactorily some means must be used for determining whether, in fact, the entire strategy has been completed. Just as was the case in the subsystem DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET, this is accomplished through CHECKPOINT in which a simple YES/NO decision is made as to the status of both steps and strategy. Remember that it is quite common to need to recycle through this process because so many concurrent activities are going on. CHECKPOINT is not to be taken as a test of whether you have made a mistake, but rather as a means of assessing whether or not the client has made sufficient progress to conclude this vital stage in the employment counselling process. When two or more strategies are planned for sequential use, CHECKPOINT would determine whether all aspects of the first strategy had been thoroughly covered and the second strategy can be undertaken. When a client is attempting to make a profound change in behaviour, CHECKPOINT may be used to determine whether or not the first stage of change has been satisfactorily completed. If all steps have been completed to your satisfaction, you must then ask if other parts of the strategy or combinations of strategies are completed. When both steps and strategy(ies) have been completed, you are ready to begin the process of evaluating client performance.

If you find that more steps remain to be completed, it is necessary to redirect your client to the unfinished tasks and plan together as to how and when they might be accomplished. If they have been completed unsatisfactorily, the existing steps should be examined to determine whether some revision is needed to make them more readily understood, easier to accomplish, or more meaningful for the client. This requires only a minimal amount of counsellor dialogue:

Counsellor: (Action plan in hand)

Now, let's take a look and see if we have done all those things we set out to do.

Client : Yes, I think we have. I can't think of anything that was left out.

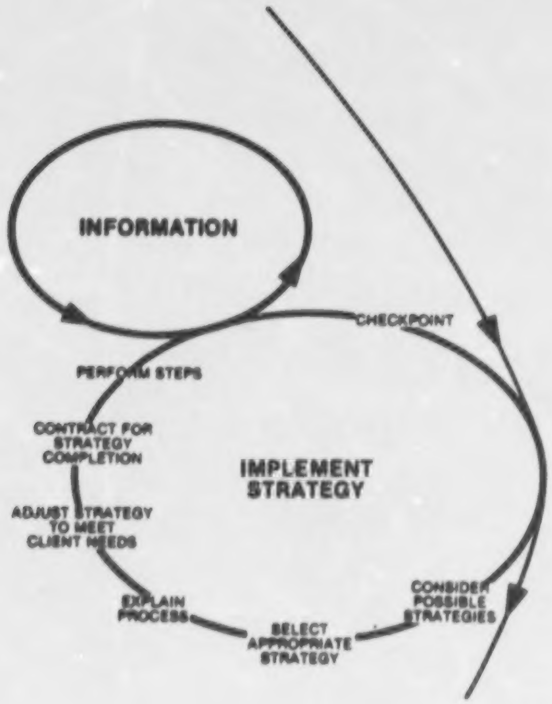
Counsellor: I can't either, Jim. (pause) Now, let's see if we can record very specifically how you are doing at this point.

The words of the counsellor's final response indicate that the process of evaluating client performance has already begun.

Repeated failure to accomplish either steps or strategy may force the counsellor to consider with the client whether or not another source of assistance might be preferable and/or desired by the client. Referral to another source of assistance may result from the realization that the client's concern is of greater magnitude than originally determined, thus requiring skills and/or time the counsellor cannot provide.

Superficial or inappropriate performance or a client's failure to perform steps may result from difficulties caused by lack of clear communication or tasks of inappropriate difficulty. If a client doesn't understand the purpose of the strategy or feels no ownership of it, motivation is understandably lessened. The strategy and steps may not seem sufficiently relevant to the client's concern to maintain client motivation. If the steps are too difficult or not sufficiently challenging, the client may not be motivated to accomplish the assigned tasks. Failure caused by situational factors such as attempting to visit employers when a car is in disrepair, cancelled job interviews, non-availability of training seats, or lack of information will require finding other alternatives and/or altering the steps.

The preceding section has focussed on the steps you will need to apply when introducing any strategy. No specific counselling strategy has yet been addressed. In this next section, we will look specifically at an Information strategy which would be conducted by using the general steps we have just learned.


INFORMATION
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Helping Clients to Obtain and Use Information

Counsellors sometimes select a strategy that is highly complex and may far exceed the needs of the client. In employment counselling we are concerned with moving a client as efficiently and quickly as possible towards target attainment. With our heavy case loads and bureaucratic duties, we are forced into a situation where we must make the best use of our time to the benefit of our clients. Obviously, in those cases where a practical, uncomplicated strategy can be used, it will reduce the time a client needs to spend in counselling and probably produce more predictable results. As already mentioned helping clients to obtain and use information is one such strategy. Let us now explore this strategy in more detail.

One way that counsellors help clients is to provide them with information or help them obtain information for themselves. Clients may need to know sources of job leads, where to apply for a particular job, how to dress for a job interview, what salary to realistically expect, or what personal habits or lack of skills will make finding a job difficult. How counsellors provide information will influence how clients understand, interpret, and use information, and how much responsibility the client will take for obtaining similar information on his/her own in the future. The need for information may involve simply the client asking a question and you providing the answer. However, because you hope to help your client become more independent, whenever possible you make use of your client's need for information to teach him/her to find out on his/her own and to develop information-seeking skills.

We can classify the client's information needs into the following categories:

1. Information useful on one specific occasion. For example, the counsellor may know where a particular job opening is and who to contact for an interview. The counsellor is the only source of the information, and there is nothing for the client to learn about obtaining information in the future from this specific occasion.

2. Information that can be found in a standard or routine way that the client can use again to find similar information in the future.

3. Information that cannot be found in a standard or routine way that the client can use again to find similar information in the future.

4. Information obtained in a way that might be useful in the future.

5. Information that the client may resist because it is contrary to his/her present expectations or beliefs. Realistic salary expectations, for example, may be resisted by a client with unrealistic expectations for him/herself.

Since the first two categories are self-explanatory and do not involve information-seeking strategies per se, we will begin with:

Specific Information Not Available in Routine Ways. When possible your client should be taught how to find relevant information on his/her own. There are times, however, when you have information for clients that would not be available to them even if they were effective information seekers. In these cases you simply give clients the information or tell them how to get it. You should verify that your client understands the information and how to use it. Except for the simplest facts, it is a good idea to have the clients write the information down. It is better to provide clients with paper and pencil than to write it for them. You want to teach responsibility and independence. This won't happen if you do things for clients that they can do for themselves.

If clients are to obtain the information from another source, they will have to make notes of the relevant facts and will need paper and pencil. Instead of you telling them to take something to write with, ask how they are going to remember the information they get, thus allowing clients to suggest writing it down. You may then ask if there will be writing materials available and, if not, what the client can do to remember to have them. This may sound almost too simple to point out, but many clients are highly dependent on others for acquiring the simplest information. They would prefer it given to them rather than to learn how to acquire it themselves. Soliciting ideas from clients rather than presenting your ideas begin to give them control and self-direction. The best help is that which assists the client to help him/herself. It is certainly all right for the counsellor to make suggestions if this can be done without taking the responsibility away from the client. A counsellor, for example, might say, "Sounds like you have a lot of good ideas about how to get this information. As you make your search, be sure that you are seeking information from people that isn't contained in books. You might ask an accountant, for example, what particular positive job aspects he/she enjoys that he/she didn't realize were going to be there when entering accounting".

It is generally useful to discuss the kinds of information to be secured, how it will be used, and, specifically, what needs to be written down and remembered. A client seeking information about a job interview should learn and remember the time and place of the interview, the name of the firm, the job being filled, and the name of the interviewer. The client needs to be aware of the specific information required before phoning or otherwise contacting the information source.

Information Obtained in a Way That Might be Useful in the Future. In this category not only is the information sought useful, but also the method of finding the information offers the opportunity to teach the client how to find things out for him/herself. Here you do not provide the information. Instead you help the client discover how to locate and use information sources. Newspapers, bulletin boards, the telephone book, personnel offices, union halls, friends, and acquaintances are among the sources of information that the client needs to know how to use in a job search. Information can be obtained by reading and listening. Who can be asked? Where would there be printed material? A good source, perhaps the best source of job leads, is friends and people one meets. Clients need to recognize this as a resource. Perhaps some information needed is in the client's own experience and needs to be recalled. A counsellor might suggest, for example, "Think about how you found the job working for A & B Corporation. You said you really went after it and your effort paid off. Think about what you did and how that effort might be channelled to help you now". Remembering how he/she found a job once before, for example, might suggest ways of finding a job now.

You should solicit ideas concerning information sources from your client. Attempt to list as many sources as possible without evaluating or rejecting any until the list is developed. As many suggestions as possible are sought from the client. For the client who has few ideas to offer, suggest one idea and have the client suggest another and alternate in this manner until the list is generated. You may have to give two ideas and have your client suggest a third. But it should be clear that the client is going to contribute. You can give cues to help your client think of a suggestion -- "Are there people you could contact?" Make your client take as much responsibility as he/she is capable of. If he/she can present no ideas, present two and ask your client to choose the better one and to suggest how the other might be changed to make it better. Your client is never relieved of the responsibility of participating. Frequently when clients find that they cannot just sit back and let the counsellor do all the work, they pitch in and work effectively in the counselling process. Because counsellors have a helping orientation it is easy for them to offer more help than is good for the client. The goal is to help the client find relevant information, but in a way that also helps him/her find similar information on his/her own in the future.

Information Contrary to Present Belief. Information is sometimes resisted, especially if it is contrary to present beliefs or expectations. Frequently this is some negative information concerning a personal characteristic or habit that makes employment difficult. It may be realistic information concerning starting salaries and entry level jobs when the client has had much higher but unrealistic expectations. This information is likely to be ignored, disbelieved, or otherwise resisted. It will be difficult to accept from the counsellor.

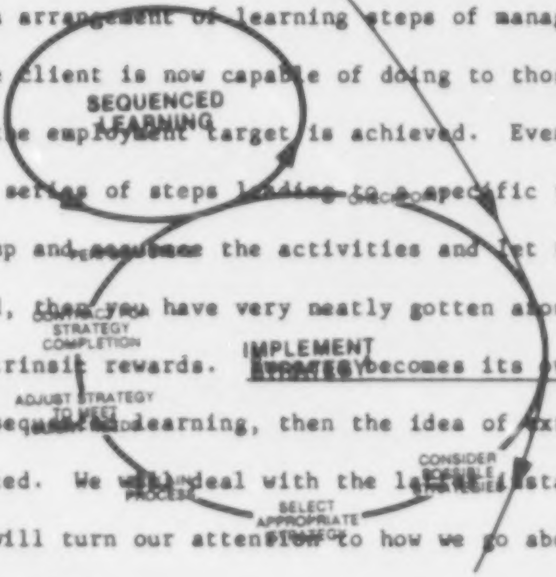
An experience may have to be identified through which your client can discover the information for him/herself. A self-study experience can be helpful. Rather than telling an individual that he/she is not groomed well enough to favorably impress an employer, you can mention the importance of good grooming and have the client evaluate him/herself. You and the client together can generate a checklist of good grooming. Your client can at home before a mirror check him/herself as satisfactory or in need of improvement on each item on the check list. In a subsequent interview, you can go over the client's self-evaluation and make suggestions when appropriate. Verify the areas the client correctly identified as satisfactory or as in need of improvement. You can also make suggestions concerning points the client may have overlooked or inappropriately evaluated. After learning whether or not your client knows how to remedy any faults found, you can give suggestions if needed through a response such as, "You've done an excellent job of checking out your appearance before each interview, but you report that you always enter the office with a feeling of not knowing just what to do. How could you give a careful check to make certain that your mind is in order and ready for this particular interview? What could you do?"

Some unpleasant truths are more easily believed or are more motivating to change when they come from peers. An effective plan for obtaining self-information may involve the client seeking opinions from peers. The realities of the job market, especially those at variance with the client's hopes or expectations, are more likely to be believed if they come from an expert, someone with current, first-hand experience. Plans for obtaining this kind of information can be developed. The client can talk to workers, employers, or personnel directors.

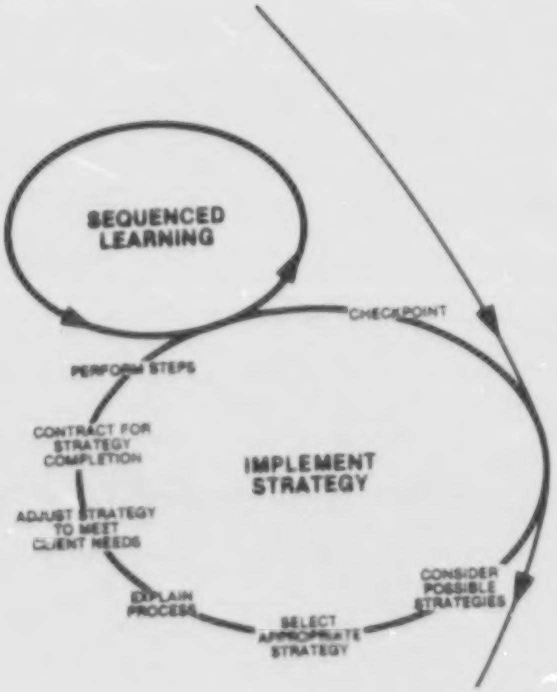
Sequenced Learning

Simply put, sequenced learning might best be thought of as a strategy without power, that is to say, it has no power other than the power a client feels in succeeding by him/herself. As we shall discover in the learning chapter, when we think about strategies we are often faced with the issue of providing some sort of external source of reward. Having come up with rewards that are external to the client (extrinsic) we then have to generate ways to transfer extrinsic rewards to self (intrinsic) rewards.

Dealing with extrinsic rewards is often no simple matter. We are confronted with such issues as determining what is rewarding for a given client; when I am providing too much or conversely too little reward; when will my client be ready to accept the transfer from being the recipient of rewards I give to his/her giving the reward to himself/herself? The beauty of sequenced learning is that although it doesn't work with every client and every concern it is a safe way to begin. Sequenced learning is an arrangement of learning steps of manageable size which leads from things the client is now capable of doing to those things he/she will be able to do when the employment target is achieved. Even more simply, sequenced learning is a series of steps leading to a specific target. Thus, if you set the situation up and sequence the activities and let the task accomplishment be its own reward, then you have very neatly gotten around the issue of having to introduce extrinsic rewards. Success becomes its own reward. Should a client not respond to sequenced learning, then the idea of extrinsic rewards will have to be introduced. We will deal with the latter instance in Chapter 6. For the moment, we will turn our attention to how we go about generating steps in sequenced learning.



A history of failure makes it difficult for some clients to learn new or modified responses. Minimizing the chance of failure and maximizing the probability of success is the key part of any learning experience. Success generates enthusiasm and continued effort while failure leads to discouragement and abandonment of effort. To promote learning and minimize failure in sequenced learning, the following should be taken into consideration:


SEQUENCED LEARNING
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

1. Divide learning into manageable steps arranged in a sequence.

2. Make the first step one that the client can manage with little effort.

3. Make each succeeding step small enough so that the client can accomplish it but not so small that there is no sense of accomplishment.

4. Involve the client in developing learning activities.

5. State each step clearly so that the client and counsellor will know what is expected and whether or not the step has been completed.

6. Praise and encourage client progress.

7. Keep the employment target clearly in mind.

An application of sequenced learning may be seen in the strategy employed in this example.

A client seeking employment wasn't making much of an effort on his own. Many days he did nothing about finding a job and spent his time watching television. Occasionally he did make some attempt to contact prospective employers. He admitted to the counsellor that his efforts were inadequate and agreed that finding employment is itself a full-time job. Rather than jumping immediately from little or no effort each day to having him spend eight hours each day in the job search, the counsellor suggested a plan to gradually increase his job search activities. First the client would plan to do at least one thing each day that might result in a job. Activities would then be added each week until the client was giving full time to the task of finding a job or until he was successful in landing one. The counsellor involved the client by having him generate a list of job-seeking activities. The counsellor made suggestions as well. One task chosen by the client to be done on a daily basis was to read the help-wanted ads and follow up on at least one ad with a phone call. The following week he reported that he had followed the plan except for one day, but had no success in obtaining work. The counsellor praised him for his effort, reminded him that he was making progress by increasing his goal-directed activity, and encouraged him to continue. According to the plan a new activity was added to the daily schedule. The client agreed to visit possible places of employment each day and to inquire about jobs. The employment target was for the client to be involved in job search activities that might result in a job each day for 2 weeks. The counsellor helped develop the plan, but involved the client in planning. The counsellor solicited suggestions from the client and offered her own suggestions. She presented choices to the client when appropriate. The counsellor helped implement the plan and encouraged client progress. Once underway the plan was largely under the control of the client to modify or continue until a job was secured.

Translating the above example into the contract format you began to learn in Chapter 2 you would end up with something that looks like this:

CONTRACT BETWEEN MRS SMITH AND GEORGE

Counselling Goal: To find steady employment

Employment Target: To actively engage in job search activities by doing at least 1 task each day for the next 2 weeks that might result in a job.

DATE TARGET AGREED UPON: JUNE 1, 1982

	SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
1.	Look up those publications that provide information on jobs in the field of auto-mechanics.	Mrs. Smith
2.	Look through the yellow pages of the telephone book and make a list of potential employers by June 2.	George/Mrs. Smith
3.	Contact friends and relatives to find out about potential job openings by June 5.	George
4.	Read help-wanted ads on a daily basis and follow up by at least one phone call to a potential employer.	George
5.	Visit at least 2 possible places for employment by next Friday.	George
6.	Arrange for a job interview before June 15.	Mrs. Smith

COMPLETION : We now plan that all parts of the contract will be completed by June 15, 1982.

PROOF OF SUCCESS : As a means of proving to ourselves that we have succeeded, we plan the following:

George will bring a list of potential employers and those he has contacted. Mrs. Smith will report back to George the time and date of the prearranged interview.

Agreed Upon by George
Mrs. Smith

Date June 1, 1982

Any one of the above action steps might be chosen as an initial learning step depending upon what might be reasonably expected from the client. Other learning steps would then be arranged to build upon the initial experience. Notice in the contract that each step involves progressively more action by the client and places him sequentially in a position which may be more personally threatening.

There are a number of ways of arranging learning steps in a sequence. Let's briefly survey a number of types of sequencing.

Natural or Logical Sequences. Sometimes the ordering of steps is dictated by the nature of the activity. Obtaining a job application, filling it out, submitting it, and following it up with a phone call, for a simple example, must be done in that order. When arranging learning steps, look for a natural or logical order.

Sequences Increasing in Complexity. If a complex skill is to be learned, a possible sequence of steps would be to start with a very simple version or with one part of the skill and increase the elements gradually until it can be accomplished in its real-life complexity. One who cannot respond well to criticism might start by learning one improved response to a particular kind of criticism. The plan would call for gradually increasing the complexity of the situation until the client could effectively use a variety of responses to criticisms from a variety of sources.

Sequences Increasing in Frequency or Duration. Frequently the learning objective is not to learn something new but to do more often something one already knows how to do. The previously described example of gradually increasing the number of job-seeking activities is an illustration of this kind of learning sequence. A variation of this same idea would be to have a client persist at some task for progressively longer periods each day until an optimal time is reached.

Sequences Decreasing in Frequency or Duration. Self-defeating habitual responses can be reduced or eliminated through the use of a learning sequence that gradually decreases the time involved in these activities or decreases the frequency of their occurrence.

Sequences Increasing in Potential Anxiety. Learning things that produce anxiety can be sequenced so that initial learning and practice take place in a nonthreatening situation, perhaps a role play with the counsellor. Later, situations holding progressively more potential threat may be attempted. For a client anxious about a job interview, practicing first with the counsellor and later with other persons before going into the actual interview would be an example of this kind of learning sequence. The client's contribution is vital in helping to suggest and order the learning steps in ascending order of anxiety and difficulty.

Regardless of the way the steps are arranged in sequenced learning, the client completes the action plan by progressing from step-to-step with each step being dependent upon the successful completion of the previous step. This principle of advancement only after mastering more simple behaviours is the key to sequenced learning.

Before leaving this chapter to look at more complex strategies useful in employment counselling, let's reflect for a moment on what we have accomplished within the "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY" subsystem of Systematic Employment Counselling. As was the case in Chapter 2 we began by listing questions that must be addressed in "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY". These questions were:

(1) Do I possess the necessary skills for working on a strategy to help my client attain the agreed-upon target?

(2) Did I select an appropriate action plan to help my client attain the agreed-upon target?

(3) Was the selected strategy clearly understood by my client?

(4) Did I take my client's needs into account when adapting the strategy?

(5) Were the steps well selected and performed?

(6) Was my client actively involved in the process?

(7) Did I verify that we had covered all the steps in IMPLEMENT STRATEGY?

We then proceeded to gradually build the steps in this stage of the system. These were graphically represented as follows:

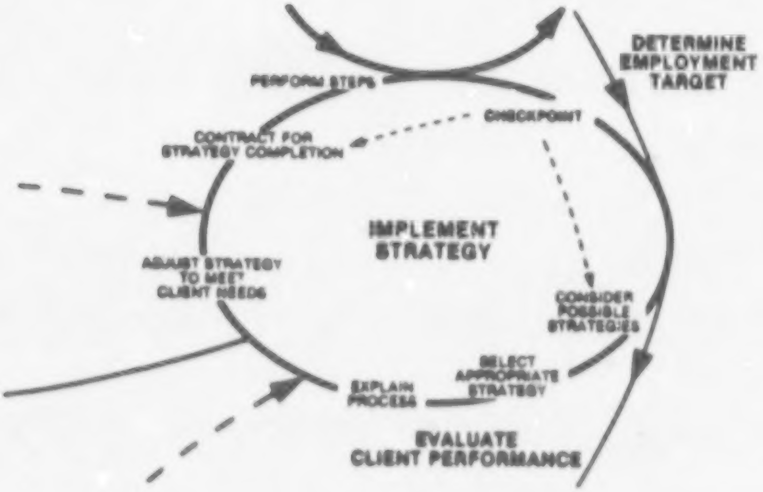

DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
PERFORM STEPS
CHECKPOINT
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Figure 3. Sequence of Steps in Implement Strategy

Finally, we introduced you to an information strategy and to sequenced learning, both of which because of their simplicity should be considered before other more elaborate strategies are implemented. It is to be noted that both procedures can and may need to be applied as well within any other strategy. Further discussion of this will occur in Chapter 8.

Summary

Determining the employment target and the strategy to be used to attain the agreed-upon target are important steps in the Systematic Employment Counselling process. Once employment targets have been established, client behaviour to be attained by the termination of employment counselling has been identified. The counselling focus now turns to introducing clients to those plans of action that will enable them to attain their targets. This occurs during IMPLEMENT STRATEGY. Any change that is to take place, any decision that is to be made, any knowledge that is to be gained will most likely occur as the result of the client and counsellor's efforts in this phase of the counselling process.

Helping clients to obtain and use information and sequenced learning, because of their relative simplicity, are two counselling strategies that should be considered before other more elaborate strategies. Sequenced learning is an arrangement of learning steps of manageable size which lead from responses the client is now capable of making to those he/she wishes to be able to make prior to terminating counselling. Decision-making, learning, and self-management strategies will be described in the next three chapters.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Define the following terms:

(a) Strategy

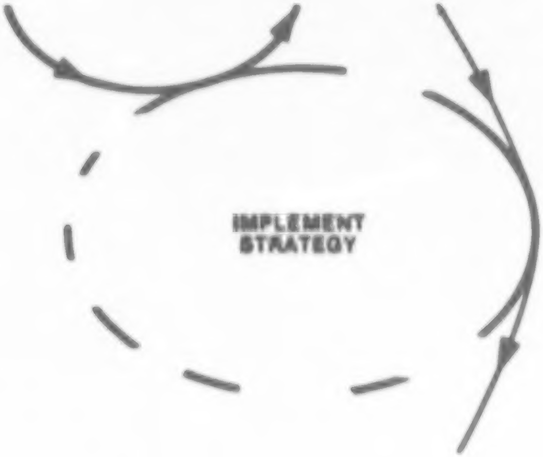
(b) Step

(c) Checkpoint

(d) Recycle

(e) Sequenced Learning

2. Using the diagram below, list the systematic steps included within the subsystem "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY".



3. (a) The choice of a strategy that is most appropriate for a given client depends upon

(b) EXPLAIN PROCESS is a vital step within "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY" because ______________________________

____

(c) During EXPLAIN PROCESS a client should be provided with:

(a) ______________________________
(b) ______________________________
(c) ______________________________
(d) ______________________________

(d) A strategy should be adapted to meet a client's need because ______________________________

____

(e) The single function within Systematic Employment Counselling that produces behaviour change is ______________________________

4. Discuss the utility of sequenced learning within the helping process.

5. Jim Kennedy is 18 years old. He has had a number of part-time jobs driving delivery trucks, all of which he found by seeing Help Wanted signs in store windows. He dropped out of high school mid-way through his final year. He is motivated to find a full-time job, partly because his parents have indicated they won't continue to support him.

You have observed three core issues that are between Jim and employment. These are:

(a) He wants employment to come to him without much effort on his part.

(b) At the same time, he doesn't seem to know what effort might be required of him or how he might help himself find employment.

(c) He speaks in a very arrogant manner, inserting lots of profanity, and you are sure that will put employers off.

He is irritating you and at moments, you find yourself wanting to lecture him. At the same time you have a sense that he just doesn't have a clue about how he comes across or how to go about finding a job.

Using what you have learned about the information strategy:

i) How would you classify his information needs?

ii) What information activities would you structure to increase his effort and at the same time, tackle his arrogant attitude?

6. Given what you know about our client Jim, including his goal and employment target:

Goal : To practice and learn job interview skills.

Target: To practice and learn 5 specific job interview skills so well that I obtain 3 job interviews in the repair field on my own initiative and to aim towards achieving this within 3 weeks.

(a) Generate a series of action steps which follow a sequenced learning format to achieve the target.

(b) Write these steps in a CONTRACT format.

(c) Identify the type or types of sequencing your action steps are based upon.

Chapter 5

Decision-Making

Overview

The concept of decision and some understanding of how individuals make decisions is important in any type of counselling, perhaps especially so in the area of employment counselling. To decide is to arrive at a solution which ends (or at least greatly reduces) uncertainty. Most clients who seek employment counselling face uncertainty and the solution lies to some degree in deciding - whether or not to take training; if so, what training; to decide if and how to balance work and family commitments; to move; to stay; to change jobs; to try again. Most counsellors have encountered clients who are immobilized by the pressures of actually making decisions which have major impacts on a large portion of their lives. Most have also encountered clients who, instead of facing a positive decision, merely drift in and out of one job after another. It is easy for most of us to understand what is meant when an individual tells us that once he/she took the decision it was easy...but arriving to the point of decision was agonizing. What makes decision-making so difficult and stressful and how, as employment counsellors, can we assist clients to deal productively with the decisions they must make?

In the pages that follow we will consider the decision-making process per se; a counselling strategy for decision-making as well as the skills required to use this strategy effectively.

Objectives

This chapter is designed to provide you with the knowledge and skills for implementing a decision-making strategy in employment counselling. Upon successful completion of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Explain how wishing is a useful technique in assisting clients to make decisions.

2. Explain why "wish-absence" is a common phenomena among clients.

3. Name several ways people typically avoid making decisions.

4. Discuss whether there is such a thing as an "ideal" decision maker.

5. Name several assumptions that underly the use of a decision-making strategy.

6. List and name in the correct order, the 8 major steps in a decision-making strategy.

7. Given numerous case studies, outline the steps you would follow to move the client through various steps within the decision-making strategy.

8. Explain why the generation of alternatives is such an important step within the decision-making process.

9. Describe and provide examples of brainstorming, atternated suggestions and paired suggestions.

10. Define and explain balance-sheeting.

11. Given a case study, set up an appropriate balance-sheet for a client. Explain how such a tool can be used to help a client reach a tentative choice.

Introductory Activity

In order to focus your attention on the subject of decision-making, let us begin with the following poem:

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh! I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

Reflect for a moment on the words in Frost's poem. Reread it several times in order to be sure that you are feeling the experience in the poem. Ask yourself the following questions:

What is the individual in the poem experiencing?
What were his/her thoughts as he/she came across the two roads?
What were the alternatives? Was one more attractive than the other?
What does "long I stood and looked down one" tell us?
What feelings came over the individual as he/she tried to decide which road to take?
Was the decision-making process simple?
Does he/she review the choice as final and irrevocable?
Does he/she have any regrets with respect to the decision made?
Can you recall a situation in your life when you experienced similar feelings?

Because of the complex and ever-changing nature of our society, we human beings find ourselves confronted continuously by situational problems with which we must cope. Although the content of our lives is largely idiosyncratic we live in a society that has expectations of us and confronts us in certain developmental stages with decision tasks similar to those of our peers. Some decisions are automatic, indeed, almost reflex actions. Little thought is involved in stopping at a red traffic light, in choosing which tie to wear to work on a particular day (particularly if the selection is limited!), and in deciding whether or not to open a checking account. Other decisions are made on impulse, with very little thought or consideration of the consequences. Take for example, the case of two neighbours heading into work in a car pool only to decide, "Let's play golf for the day. It's too beautiful to work. Whether the boss will like it doesn't matter!" or the case of a couple on a tight budget who order an expensive meal in a restaurant "Let's order filet mignon tonight". Routine and/or impulsive decisions can be thought of as "cold" decisions in the sense that very little if any emotional stress is involved in deciding. On the other hand many of our decisions are "hot" decisions - aroused by more vital concerns of health, safety and emotional stability (Abelson, 1963). Hot decisions are made in a context of stress; consequences of hot decisions are usually very difficult to calculate. Examples of hot decisions include deciding what to do upon being fired; choosing one's career, deciding to compete for a job, choosing a marriage partner and deciding on a medical course of action for a serious illness.

Needless to say, many of the client concerns brought to employment counselling involve hot decisions and offer opportunities for you to help clients develop decision-making skills. There is no doubt that making decisions is easier for some clients than for others. Some clients (and counsellors, regrettably) have virtually no skills in decision-making; they tend to act on impulse alone or let others or time factors decide for them. Other clients have only a vague idea of how to make decisions. They may realize that a process is involved, but be unable to describe the process and admit that they, themselves, have never thought of using a decision-making process at a decision point. As Miller et al (1960) point out:

> "An ordinary person almost never approaches a problem systematically and exhaustively unless he has been specifically educated to do so. It is much more natural for him to visualize what is and what ought to be and to focus on the gap between them than to visualize some huge set of alternative possibilities through which he must search." p. 160

And many, if not most, individuals at certain crucial decision moments get stuck. The gap appears so large that to close it appears impossible; the risks in closing it appear too great. Some of you may have read an interesting reply from Ann Landers to an individual trying to decide whether to return to medical school. The woman stated that she had always dreamed of medical school and now, when it was possible, it seemed impractical. It would involve so much work and sacrifice. It would take at least 6 years before she could set up practice and by then she would be 42. Should she go or just forget it as a childhood dream that she should have matured out of long ago? Ann Lander's reply was one thought provoking sentence "If you don't go, in six years you'll still be 42".

Wishing

In his book Love and Will, Rollo May presents the important insight that the will to do something is always preceded by the wish to do that thing. There is seldom or never a resolute action without a prior wish. In the sense meant here, the wish is a longing for a certain future; it is, in May's words "a capacity to reach down deep into ourselves and preoccupy ourselves with a longing to change the future". Wishing is the imaginative projection of oneself into future possible states of actions. Only after wishing occurs can a person pull the "trigger of effort" to initiate commitment, choice, and then, action.

Of course, much wishing is empty; no decision forms, no action is taken. Some persons go no further than the wish. What counsellor has not heard the ineffectual, plaintive cry: "Oh, how I wish ...". Experience with this sort of "empty wishing" should not, however, blind counsellors to the crucial part that the wish plays as a first step in virtually all decisions. The individual initiates through wishing and carries through or enacts through decision. You will recall the discussion of dreaming and fantasy (Chapter 2) as a useful technique in assisting individuals to establish goals; similarly you can see its application as a basis for decision-making.

The wish-blocked individual has enormous difficulties in the decision-process. The reasons for wish-absence are not hard to find. Failure to wish is, for some, an effective means of avoiding rejection or disappointment. Others who cannot cope with feeling vulnerable choose the safer path of not wanting (wishing). Others, defeated and demoralized by oppressive life conditions become numbed and deadened to internal experience; they cannot "feel" the wish. Counsellors will recognize the chronically unemployed who often seem numbed, who no longer "feel" the wish for a better job future. Individuals who depend on others to take care of them often believe that benevolent caretakers should be able to "magically" read their wishes. Or they may simply not permit themselves to wish because they fear that the expression of personal desire (wish) will irritate, annoy, or drive away their much-needed caretakers.

Why are Decisions so Difficult?

In a great many situations calling for a decision, there occurs more a flirting with decision rather than the making of a true decision. Beckett's play Waiting for Godot is a great literary testimony to broken decision. The characters in the play plan, think, wish, procrastinate, waver but do not decide. The play ends with:

Vladimir: Shall we go?
Estragon: Let's go
(stage directions): No one moves.

So much of social life seems to be made up of just such situations: wavering, passing the buck, letting others decide, manifesting indifference or passivity in the face of situations which call out for decisions. Why?

Counselling is, in its better sense, a planful, focussed, scrutinizing, resolving activity. Virtually all persons who seek counselling have decisions to make. Some clients face specific, clearly identified life-decisions: Shall I go to this training, shall I have this surgery, shall I attempt to have another child, shall I take this job? In such instances the specific decision seems well-defined and the client shows a commitment to the decision-making process.

Other clients say they know, in a more general sense, what they wish to do - for example, stop smoking, lose weight, get a job, try to meet people, learn to speak in public - but are not able to decide (commit themselves) to do it. Still other clients say they know what is wrong - they are too lazy, too workaholic, too impulsive, too uneducated, too angry, - but they do not know even how to start a decision process which might lead to desirable change.

Unmade decisions are often very costly. They can be extremely painful (emotionally). They are wasteful of time, money and purpose in life. They can disrupt relationships with peers, loved ones, employers, etc.. Most of all, an unmade decision can have a paralyzing effect on a person and can infiltrate and contaminate other areas of life seemingly unrelated to the specific decision point.

In John Gardner's novel Grendel the protagonist made a pilgrimage to an old priest in order to learn of life's mysteries. The old man spoke to him saying at one point, "The ultimate evil is that time is perpetual, perishing and involves elimination." He concluded his thoughts with the devastating epigram:

> "Things fade: alternatives exclude."

In our lives, things do fade, including ourselves. Knowledge of this is for some a knowledge which is translated into such fateful statements as:

> "Oh well what difference does it make anyway?", "What's the point, after all?", "Does it really make any difference what I decide?".

"Alternatives exclude" is one of the most potently inhibiting factors in decision-situations. Every yes requires a no. To decide one thing means to give up something else - usually many something elses. Decisions are very expensive in terms of time, emotions, and sometimes material considerations. They may cost as much, or more, as holding onto unmade decisions. Decision, then, also means loss. In deciding, one must give up options, sometimes forever. Part of the pain of decision-making is that a decision, once made and acted upon, signifies a limitation of possibilities. To deliberately close off possibilities is to engender considerable anxiety. It is very comforting to think of oneself as special, as one who has many possibilities. It is, conversely, very discomforting to admit that one has only limited possibilities. This is the painful core of decision-making.

This core is very evident in Robert Frost's poem. It is interesting to reflect on the poets' desire to hold on to all possibilities and to renounce nothing in the line "Oh! I kept the first for another day", tempered by the poignant reality of "but, knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back!"

Decisions involve taking responsibility for oneself. To become fully aware that one does make decisions means that one must take full self-responsibility. Others, and society can no longer be blamed for what is right or wrong, satisfying and dissatisfying in life, including the consequences of choice. To make a fundamental decision is a lonely act, for in such a moment the decider is alone. Only a decider can decide.

Deciding often entails a feeling of guilt also. For example, the woman who decides to work also decides to leave her children in the care of someone else. This decision may carry with it a rather heavy load of guilt. Guilt or fear of guilt has dissuaded many from carrying through on their decisions.

So it is easy to see why decision-making is difficult. Apart from the fact that an individual may not know how to approach decisions, or may not have the information or knowledge which a particular decision requires, there are emotional factors: guilt, anxiety, loss, self-responsibility which contribute to the difficulty and pain of decision-making.

How People Avoid Making Decisions

Since decisions are painful and often require that desirable options (possible options) be given up, and require that the decider assume personal responsibility for the decision made, then it is not surprising that individuals use various devices for avoiding or sabotaging decisions. Counsellors have to be able to recognize these avoidance methods and know how to respond in a useful way to such avoidance. We have attempted to suggest some helpful methods in Chapter 3 which dealt with reluctant clients. These methods apply directly in decision-making as well.

Procrastination is the most obvious way of avoiding decision-making. What counsellor has not seen countless clients tormenting themselves by putting off, and putting off endlessly. Often, an individual will find countless diversionary activities and tasks to become involved in which, in effect, "save" one from moving on to decide.

A frequent tactic for avoiding renunciation is to trade down. For example, a husband and wife agree (decide) to separate. Full separation is, of course, painful. One way to give up less is to take up separate lodging but continue to engage in sexual liaison from time to time. Needless to say, this arrangement merely delays facing the ultimate decision about whether or not to actually separate. However, in the meantime, the pain and anxiety engendered by the separation are lessened because, for the time being, not everything is given up. Similarly, an individual demoted to an uninteresting job may choose to swallow pride and interest and stay rather than risk an uncertain job future elsewhere.

A second method of avoiding the anxiety engendered by giving up options is to devaluate the unchosen alternative. Comfortable decision-making assumes that the chosen alternative is attractive while the unchosen ones are unattractive. When two alternatives are very nearly equal in their appeal, the decision maker will often consciously (or unconsciously) begin to magnify and exaggerate slight differences until they seem to be rather large differences. Another method used to devaluate desirable alternatives is to distort the information one receives about them. About a job alternative, the client may say, "Well, I heard from my friend Joe that Company X really doesn't treat their employees very well." It really doesn't matter what Joe actually said, nor does it matter how the company in question does treat employees. If the client is able to take any piece of information and convert it to his/her own use in making the alternative seem less acceptable, then he/she is quite likely to do it. This has the effect of reducing cognitive dissonance and allows him/her to escape the pain that often accompanies a true, undistorted decision.

Another method of avoiding decision making is to leave the decision to someone else. Clients will frequently try to trap the counsellor into making difficult decisions for them. A client may even demand that the counsellor decide just what should be done. This, of course, neatly removes the client from the responsibility for a) making a decision, b) following through with commitment, and c) shouldering responsibility if complications arise in the action stage of decision-making. Many persons show a distinctly ambivalent attitude in this regard. They yearn for, even demand, the privilege of "freedom" of choice; yet they refuse to experience the pain and isolation which usually accompanies real choice-making.

Finally, one of the most prominent methods of avoiding decision-making is to delegate decisions to some "thing". From antiquity to the present people have consulted fate for advice in decision-making. Fate may take the form of dice, coins, tea leaves, the stars, dieties, the palm of one's hand, changes in the weather, or "voices". A novel version of this method of avoiding decision-making is Luke Rhineheart's book The Dice Man. The main character makes one fundamental and final decision: to leave all further decisions up to chance - the roll of the dice. Whenever the dice man is called upon to account for his actions he has one answer, "The dice told me to do it."

Rules are another handy device for avoiding decisions. Traditional societies of the past certainly seemed to limit initiative, choice, and freedom. However, they also offered relief from the format of such decisions as: Whom shall I marry? What vocation shall I pursue? How shall I spend my free time? What religion shall I take up? Shall I change jobs? Shall/can I divorce? - and so on.

The bureaucratic nature of current society enmeshes us all in an endless maze of rules with an accompanying restriction on personal initiative and commitment. Rules are widely applied to avoid the very complicated task of personal decision-making in organizational contexts. A thoughtful example of how "rules allow one to avoid decision" is given by Bugental about a client of his who was a dean of students:

Dean Stoddert smiled understandingly but with a trace of sadness at the girl as she said, "I certainly understand now why you did as you did, but you see I really have no choice in the matter. If I made an exception for you now, then I'd have to make an exception for everyone else who had good reasons for breaking the rules. Pretty soon the rules would be meaningless, wouldn't they? So, although I really am sorry about it, the situation is clear, and it calls for you to be restricted to campus for the next month."

The student looked appreciatively at the Dean through her tears. "It helps to know that you understand, but somehow it just doesn't seem fair under the circumstances. This will mean I'll lose my job, and I don't know whether Dad will be able to keep me in school or not." The Dean was sympathetic but made it evident that she had no choice.

When the student was gone, Dean Stoddert sat back in her chair for a minute, herself swept by contradictory feelings. On the other hand, she felt a certain satisfaction that she had finally trained her feelings and her judgment to the point where she could stand firm when the regulations required it. For so many years she had found herself carried away by her sympathies so that she almost never was able to combine understanding with consistent application of the rules...

> Ruefully, Margaret Stoddert reflected that it had been a real struggle to be able to handle a situation as she had just handled this one. Yet, and here the irony came in, somehow she wasn't content. Somehow, she felt vaguely uneasy even as she reassured herself that she had done the job well. Later in the day, on the couch in my office, she found herself ruminating: "I don't know what it is that keeps bothering me about that interview, but I feel restless whenever I think about it. And I keep thinking about it. It's like there's something I've overlooked, but I can't think what it might be..."

In this example Dean Stoddert avoided the role of decision-maker. She had not just administered the rules; she had been administered by the rules. If choice was exercised, there would be risk, even danger. Her rationale for that danger was: "If I make an exception for you now, then I'd have to make an exception for everyone else who has good reasons for breaking the rules."

Turning decisions over to others, to fate, to things, to rules, all are methods of avoiding the burden of making and carrying through on decisions.

Given then that decisions are frequently very difficult, that many pitfalls can occur between the wish to decide and the actual decision and that many people have little idea of how to decide, what can decision counselling offer?

Decision Counselling

As a counselling process, decision-making can be divided into two main stages: the relationship stage and the decision-making stage.

1. Relationship Stage. The relationship stage establishes the working connection between counsellor and client and provides the psychological environment in which risks can be taken and decisions and their consequences examined. Much has already been said both in the Assessment module and in the earlier chapters of this text about the importance of the counselling relationship as the foundation of Systematic Employment Counselling. We will therefore not elaborate further here but merely remind. The ideas presented earlier in this chapter on the intrapersonal conflicts often present in decision-making are obviously important for counsellors to understand and feel in order to be able to establish connections with clients in decisional conflict.

2. Decision Stage. Is there such a thing as an ideal decision-maker? Actually, the "ideal" decision-maker probably does not exist. However, it is useful to have some notion about what constitutes "ideal" decision-making. Such a model can serve as a guide in choosing practical procedures for guiding or facilitating the decision-making process.

Through an extensive review of the literature on decision-making, Janis and his colleagues developed a list of seven procedural criteria which, if adhered to, would have the best chance of guaranteeing that a decision of high quality is made and implemented. Further, failure to meet any one of the criteria (at least in part) constitutes a defect in the decision-making process. The more defects, the more likely that the decision will be ineffective and regretted. The "ideal" decision-maker to the best of his/her ability:

1. Identifies the objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by the decision.
2. Canvasses a range of alternative courses of action.
3. Examines the costs and risks of both negative and positive consequences which could result from each alternative.
4. Deliberately searches out new information relevant to the evaluation of the alternatives.
5. Takes into account new information and expert opinion or technical advice to which he/she is exposed even though such information, opinion and advice does not support the initial preference.
6. Reviews the positive and negative consequences of all known alternatives, including those initially judged to be unacceptable, before making a final decision.
7. Makes provisions for implementing the chosen course of action, including the formation of contingency plans that might be required if known risks or difficulties arise.

As already alluded to, very few of us, if any, wholly meet these criteria in arriving at decisions. In fact, if we did, the result would probably be obsessive-compulsive behaviour. At the same time, many people have no framework, structure or methods to assist them to think clearly and look as objectively as possible at a decision to be made and its consequences. The decision-making strategy we are suggesting is highly cognitive and is designed to assist people involved in "hot" decisions to come closer to clear thinking and thoughtful decisions. There are risks in presenting such a cognitive model - some may react by feelings "It's just too logical. No one decides that way. It won't work"; others may react with "That's it - that's the only way to decide anything"...and ignore the emotional upheavals often involved in decision. We encourage a balanced perspective and are reminded of a story told by a lecturer who was faced with the decision of which of three countries to choose when emigrating from South Africa. He followed all the cognitive procedures and carefully weighed the pros and cons of each alternative. The results were (a) USA; (b) England; (c) Canada. Happy with his decision he went to bed and awoke the following morning knowing he would come to Canada and he did! What happened? Did the cognitive model fail? Did the cognitive procedures sift through enough data for him that the decision suddenly made itself known? Would he have made the same decision without having tried to work carefully and logically at his choices? No one truly knows (including him) what happens at the actual moment of decision when one option can become crystal clear. It is known, however, that a cognitive process can assist in movement towards more effective decisions. It is with such a balanced perspective that we ask you to approach this strategy. The strategy is also suitable for self-use and it would be beneficial to select a decision you are trying to make and to try out the techniques which will be presented. If you can make the techniques work for you, it will be easier for you to help clients use them. Before we elaborate on a decision-making strategy, let's see how you do in the following exercise.

EXERCISE I

1(a) Wishing is a useful technique in assisting clients to make decisions. Why?

____

____

____

(b) Where else has this technique been found useful thus far in Systematic Employment Counselling?

____

____

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2. The wish-blocked individual experiences great difficulty in making a decision yet wish absence is not hard to find. Why?

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____

____

3. Name several ways people typically avoid making decisions.

a) ______________________________

____

b) ______________________________

____

c) ______________________________

____

4. Is there such a thing as an "ideal" decision-maker? Explain. (Include a reference to Janis in your answer).

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A Decision-Making Strategy For Employment Counselling

Assumptions in Applying a Decision-Making Strategy

The decision-making strategy we will be introducing to you is based on the following assumptions:

1. Clients must be active. Clients play an active role in the counselling process. As Lippitt and Schindler-Reinman (1973) state "Persons to be affected by plans and decisions should have a part in making these plans and decisions." Clients must also assume responsibility for the consequences of the decisions. Clients must learn to identify and analyse problems, define goals and generate alternative courses of action that might lead to goal achievement. In effect they must learn to be their own counsellors. Helping clients become more self-directed is preventive counselling. It prepares clients for anticipated problems rather than just responding to problem crises. Lack of opportunities to make decisions or infrequent success when making choices prevents the development of skill and confidence in decision-making. Many clients are inept decision-makers, reluctant to make important choices and dependent upon others to make decisions for them. They come to employment counselling to have decisions made - What should I do? What job would be best for me? These are decisions that must be made by the client not by the employment counsellor. Employment counsellors can best assist these clients by helping them to become better decision-makers and take responsibility for their own decisions.

2. Decision-making always contains the uncertain. Many employment counsellors and clients approach employment counselling with the idea that decision-making, particularly as it concerns vocational and career planning, is highly scientific and that the end product is an exact vocational or career plan. Clients should be aware that complete certainty in decision-making is not possible. For example, it is common procedure in decision-making to consider

and evaluate alternatives and to then eliminate those that are impractical or not feasible. Often a good decision can be accomplished in this respect by a comparative approach in which the relative advantages and disadvantages of various plans are considered. However, this process will not yield a single perfect solution. On the contrary, a number of feasible alternatives are likely to result. Clients should be encouraged to pursue and experiment with several directions rather than latch on to a single, narrow goal.

3. Decisions change. Still other employment counsellors and clients approach employment counselling with the belief that decisions are made at a point in time and are final. Quite the opposite is true! Decision-making is an ongoing process as is particularly evident within the domain of vocational and career counselling. Super's (1957) developmental self-concept theory of vocational behaviour, for example, views decisions as being made within the context of changes in life and changes in self-concept. There is also a present trend toward both job and occupational mobility (Toffler, 1970). Lippitt and Schindler-Rainman (1973) suggest that clients should discard the outdated expectation of entering and retiring from the same job and instead adopt the more realistic expectation of making numerous vocational decisions.

4. Too much information can inhibit decisions. We have all heard of the information explosion which is now part of our every day lives and which in many ways can produce debilitating results. People talk nostalgically about a time when life seemed simpler, pace was slower and options were fewer. Perhaps we

have all experienced situations which frustrate us because there is just too much information to absorb. Buying one's first car is a case in point. One tends to read, look, test drive, consult with various friends, list advantages and disadvantages. At every turn, we are convinced that X is the best buy for very good reasons and also Y and Z are the best buys for very different but still very good reasons. At some point, we may find ourselves completely unable to fit together all available information and simply choose the one we like best for many wrong reasons. A slight exaggeration perhaps, but as counsellors assisting clients with decisions, it is important to recognize that too much information can be just as debilitating as too little information.

5. What to exclude is as important as what to include. When facing decisions, it is important to recognize that one has alternatives, that options are open. At the same time, alternatives and options may be many and it is not clear that the time and energy spent exploring all possible alternatives necessarily yields a better decision than time and energy spent exploring a few. Counsellors need to keep in mind that a frequent decision making problem is what information to ignore rather than what to include.

6. The timing of the decision is often as crucial as the decision itself. This can best be exemplified in the case of the individual who goes ahead and marries the "right" person but is not ready for marriage per se or the case of a person who buys the "perfect" house but the mortgage rates are unrealistically high for his/her budget.

Decision-Making Strategy

Assuming that you have established a working connection with your client, then the counselling focus becomes one of:

1. Forming the decision;
2. Implementing (maintaining) the decision; and
3. In many cases, re-deciding.

This is an over-simplified statement but it suggests the three main organizing points in the decision-making process.

In utilizing a decision-making strategy in employment counselling two questions are of prime importance. First, which decision-making model is most feasible to use within the context of employment counselling? And, second, what specific counselling skills are appropriate and useful at different points of the decision-making process?

The steps of the decision-making model we will be using are presented in Figure 4.

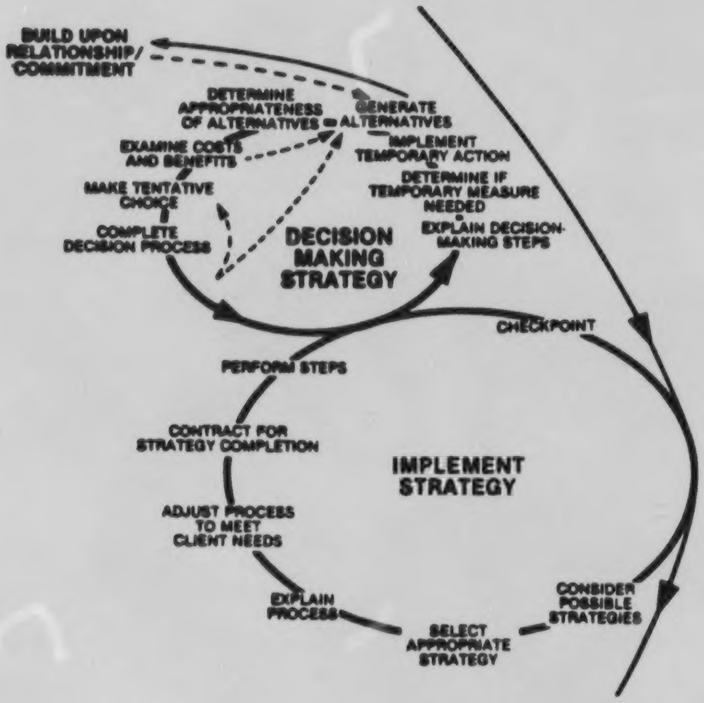

BUILD UPON RELATIONSHIP/ COMMITMENT
DETERMINE APPROPRIATENESS OF ALTERNATIVES
GENERATE ALTERNATIVES
IMPLEMENT TEMPORARY ACTION
EXAMINE COSTS AND BENEFITS
DETERMINE IF TEMPORARY MEASURE NEEDED
MAKE TENTATIVE CHOICE
COMPLETE DECISION PROCESS
DECISION MAKING STRATEGY
EXPLAIN DECISION-MAKING STEPS
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST PROCESS TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

Figure 4. Sequence of Steps in Implementing A Decision-Making Strategy

A more detailed description is provided in Table 1. On the left the steps in the decision-making process are presented; in the middle are suggested counselling skills and techniques for each step in the process and on the right are guiding questions for the counsellor. In actual practice, the steps in the decision-making process are not necessarily sequential nor are the counselling skills as neatly laid out as suggested by the diagram. A client will frequently overlap the steps, for example, he/she might begin to think of alternatives before the concern has been defined. He/she may backtrack to earlier stages or phases; for example, new information will often make it necessary to back up and clarify some aspect of the problem or decision which has been overlooked. Some stages may even be skipped altogether, and sometimes several stages may be accomplished simultaneously.

TABLE 1
DECISION-MAKING STRATEGY BREAKDOWN

	STEPS	SKILLS/TECHNIQUES	GUIDING QUESTIONS
1.	Explain decision-making steps	Structuring Listening Paraphasing Verbal reinforcement	Is my client ready for problem solving? Can my client define the problem as one of choice?
2.	Determine if temporary action is needed	Mild probing Listening	Does my client have the time to search?
3.	Implement temporary action	Verbal reinforcement Contracting	Does my client need an action to allow him/her time to explore and search?
4.	Generate Alternatives	Open-ended lead Brainstorming Dreaming Alternated suggestion Paired suggestion	Have all alternatives known to both of us been identified?
5.	Determine appropriateness of alternatives	Open-ended lead Mild confrontation Balance sheet method Verbal reinforcement	Have the pros and cons of each alternative been identified?
6.	Examine costs and benefits of remaining alternatives	Balance sheeting Structuring Mild confrontation	Have the pros and cons of each remaining alternative been examined?
7.	Make tentative choice	Open-ended lead Summarizing	Has my client chosen the most promising alternative? Is it consistent with interests, values, abilities and goals? Will environmental factors permit it to work?
8.	Complete decision process	Contracting Forward planning Verbal reinforcement Open-ended lead Mild probing	Has the client developed a plan? Have steps been taken to maintain client commitment?

You will notice that the same systematic approach applies to decision-making as applied to establishing targets. In this strategy, eight major steps are to be completed in order to assist clients through the decision-making process. Again, these steps serve as a blueprint for counsellors to follow in order to provide structure and direction to working with clients. You will also notice while working through this strategy that the concept of "client perceived risk" is important. This concept was discussed in detail in the chapter on "Reluctant Clients". The same principles of assisting clients to examine the risks to themselves of deciding or not deciding apply in decision-making. Just as clients may be reluctant to trust and to change, they may be reluctant to decide for the same kinds of reasons - fears, insecurities, the unknown. As you study this strategy, recall what you have learned about reluctance and risk and begin to explore the application of these principles to decision-making.

Let us now examine each step in the decision-making process in some detail. For illustration purposes, consider the case of Nancy, a 35 year old secretary, who reports to your office looking weary and presents you with the following concerns:

> "I just don't know what to do! I'm just beat. I can't do everything at once - something has to give. And to make matters worse, I'm going to be laid off. I'm doing a good job. I've been told that but they're cutting back and I have no seniority so it's tough luck for me. So I need to look now for something else and the whole idea just exhausts me. I don't want to lose my job. I don't want to have to start over. What should I do?"

While we cannot consider Nancy's concerns vague, there are too many of them to know where to begin to focus. Several concerns are present - Nancy seems over-extended and tired; frightened about losing her job and finding another; not accepting the coming reality of being laid off; recognizing an urgent need to find something else soon; and wanting the counsellor to sort it all out and tell her what to do.

Putting into practice what you have learned in the Assessment module you help Nancy to elaborate on the problem situation more specifically by identifying all of the relevant details and circumstances related to her expressed concerns. This includes not only present events but related background information as well. This process results in the following description of the situation:

> "My husband and I have been married 8 years. We have two children - 3 and 4 years of age. A year ago we bought a new house. We made that decision knowing it meant I had to work full-time for at least five years to make ends meet and try to reduce the mortgage. I've done that and it's all been OK until this lay off business. I've tried to keep up with everything. We entertain at least three times a week - my husband brings his friends for dinner once a week - we've always done that; I have a family dinner on Sunday and at least once more during the week, something comes up. I don't mind preparing the meals but I'm proud of our home and try to keep it clean and in some state of organization. However, that's pretty hard to do sometimes with two young boys. On Tuesday evenings, I

always put in several hours of volunteer work for the Children's Hospital. I've done that for years when I wasn't working. I don't want to let them down by quitting. My job has been going fine except that some days I'm really tired. Now I'm depressed too because of this lay off that's coming. I really enjoy working - in fact, I am now taking courses in business management so that I can eventually work as an executive secretary. I know I can do it if I'm given a fair chance. Now I don't know whether even to bother. I thought I had a future going. Now when I have to add looking for a new job, there simply aren't enough hours in the day for me to do what I need to do. I'm just exhausted to the point that I feel I'm losing control of the situation."

We will not repeat the type of dialogue which would likely ensue in working with Nancy to establish a goal and target to work towards in employment counselling. This has been elaborated upon extensively in Chapter 2. We will leap forward to client and counsellor having established the following goal:

> "To re-structure my time commitments so that I am able to begin actively searching for a new job".

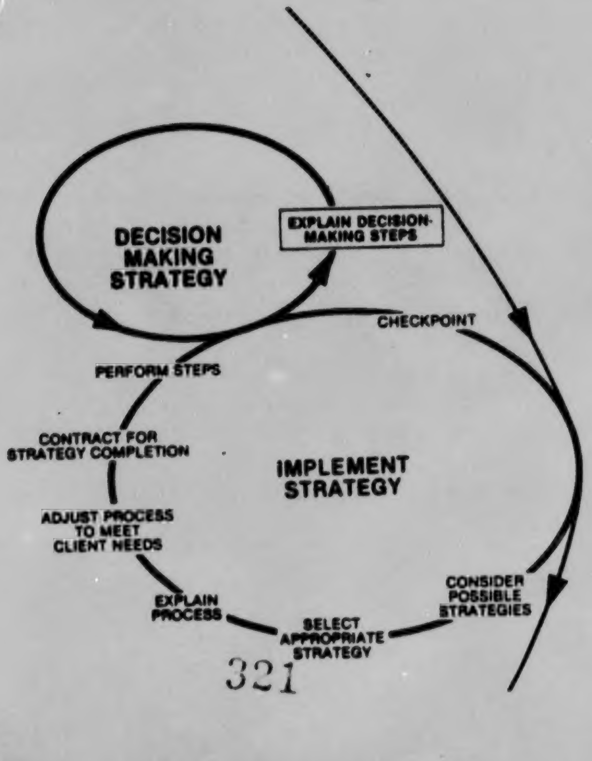
and the following more specific employment target:

> "To reduce my home, work and community commitments within the next three weeks so much that I can develop a list of possible employers and an interview plan fully within this time period".

It goes without saying that counsellor and client have come a long way from Nancy's initial concerns which were, understandably, overwhelming her to the point where she has recognized that she has to make some important decisions about her time if she is to succeed in finding another job. Putting the target into action is of course the difficult part because Nancy has to take decisions and to give up certain activities which she will be reluctant to do. Nancy has many options available to her. Deciding among them is not easy because each option is meeting one of her needs and fulfilling part of her self-defined role in terms of family and work.

Let's move through decision-making with Nancy.

1. Explain Decision-Making Steps


DECISION MAKING STRATEGY
EXPLAIN DECISION-MAKING STEPS
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST PROCESS TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

The counselling goals during this step are to:

(a) explain decision-making procedures to the client

(b) ensure client readiness for problem solving/decision-making

(c) confirm that the client perceives the problem as one of choice or decision and

(d) to initiate decision-making

Explaining decision-making steps is straight forward and requires the use of structuring. This technique is used throughout Systematic Employment Counselling and is a specific counsellor response intended to provide the client with an overview and framework for what will happen in counselling. In this case, a counsellor might say:

> "Nancy, I think I have a pretty good understanding of your concerns and you seem ready to work on both making changes in the kinds of demands placed on your time and at the same time get started on a list of possible employers. Let me explain how you might proceed with making some decisions. We could spend a good part of our meeting today looking at all possible alternatives to reduce your time commitments. We will work together at generating as many possibilities as we can. Then we'll look at a method for evaluating each alternative. That will include looking at each alternative in terms of your values, interests and the practicality of each. Some of this you'll be able to complete between now and our next session. Gradually, we'll begin to eliminate alternatives and try to

> arrive at one or two which seem to fit for you. We'll look very carefully at these and finally select one. We can then plan how to get that alternative into action and how to stick with your decision. With that behind, it may be easier and timely to begin to focus on a list of employers and an action plan to get a new job. How does that sound to you?"

Such detail is not always necessary depending on your client. Structuring can be as simple as:

> "Our basic procedure will be to generate a large pool of possibilities to reduce the demands on you, examine each in detail and eventually decide which one seems best for you. We can get a good start on this today but it may take some work between meetings and at least one more meeting to decide which is your choice and then one more to get started on the job search. How does this sound to you?"

The purpose of structuring is to give the client information on what he/she can expect and to solicit client reaction to the process.

There is no point in proceeding with a decision-making strategy unless your client perceives the problem as, at least partly, one of his/her decision or choice (i.e. within his/her control) and unless your client is emotionally ready to problem-solve. Therefore, the second purpose of structuring - getting your client's reaction to the process - is very important. We can visualize this as two sets of mental questions, one set for counsellor, one for client as follows:

Counsellor	Client
1. Can my client define the problem, at least in part, as one of choice?	1. Is it realistic to hope for change?
2. Is my client ready to problem-solve?	2. Are the risks (consequences) serious if I don't do anything? Are they serious if I do?

If your client in decision-making is hopeful that change is possible and will make a difference, and if your client sees risks in not changing - (i.e. If I don't do something, the situation will just get worse and I won't be able to handle it), then as a counsellor, you can be relatively sure that your client does see the problem as choice and is emotionally ready to proceed. The less these two conditions exist, the less likely that your client is ready.

Listening and paraphrasing carefully and empathically is very important in order to determine client readiness. It will enable these three things to occur:

(a) by paraphrasing, the counsellor is able to determine if the client is expressing an attitude of problem-solving;

(b) by listening, the counsellor enables an extinction of high affective arousal (emotion) to occur, thus placing the client in a better frame of mind for rational problem-solving; and

(c) through the listening paraphrase, the counsellor is able to confirm and demonstrate an understanding of the client's situation to the client, thus forming a basis for mutual participation in problem-solving. This is crucial in all phases of decision-making/problem-solving.

Let's return to Nancy:

Nancy : It all sounds very reasonable but I've tried already to think about what I can give up and what I have to keep doing and the only thing I can really give up is my volunteer work and that's what I enjoy most.

Counsellor: So when you've tried to resolve this yourself, it seems the only way is to give up what means the most to you.

Nancy : Yes, and that makes me depressed because it's the only thing I really do for myself. Everything else I have to do for a reason - the mortgage, my marriage, our kids, the family.

Counsellor: So you kind of see only one choice area - volunteer work; the rest you don't see as choices - they are things you have no choice about.

Nancy : Yeah, that's it.

Counsellor: What would happen, Nancy, if you did give up your volunteer work? Have you asked yourself if that would solve your difficulties with time and pressure?

Nancy : Yes I have and no it wouldn't. It's only three hours a week and I always come back home more cheerful, somehow more ready to cope.

Counsellor: So if you made that choice, the consequences might be worse in that you'd lose something special for you and something that helps you handle everything else.

Nancy : Uh, huh, but it all seems stupid because if I don't do something, I'll end up not coping at all.

Counsellor: So you're really saying there have to be other choices even though you don't know what they are as yet.

Nancy : Yes I guess I am saying that. I just can't see the other choices.

Counsellor: But they might be there.

Nancy : They have to be there.

Counsellor: That's a good start, Nancy - to be able to see that they must exist. Let's begin to look at that .. ...etc.

It is important to note that the counsellor does not ask the client directly the mental questions we posed earlier. Rather, through listening and paraphrasing, the counsellor begins to direct Nancy's attention to seeing the issues as choice and decision-related and is continually listening for Nancy's expression of some hope that change is possible. Thus, Nancy's readiness for decision-making begins to increase and the structure is already in place for decision-making to be initiated.

We also indicated in Table 1 that verbal reinforcement is important at this step of decision-making. It is of course important throughout counselling to provide an atmosphere of encouragement and support. Notice above the counsellor's use of "That's a good start, Nancy" - to reinforce Nancy's attitude that choices must exist. Counsellors convey this non-verbally through looking at the client, nodding, smiling, leaning towards the client etc. and verbally through statements such as the above. Look at this short list for examples:

> "That's a very good list you made out, that should help a lot".
> (reinforcing independent list making)

"Your suggestion that we consider alternative two is a good one" (reinforcing the client's suggestions)

"I'm really impressed by your attitude" (reinforcing positive client attitude)

EXERCISE II

1. Charles Duguay had been unsuccessful in finding employment and was discouraged. He was thinking about moving to another province where he hoped he would have more luck in finding a job. He didn't know whether or not this would be a good idea and asked his employment counsellor's help in deciding. Charles seemed to know little about how to make decisions and had not looked at all at alternatives.

   If you were his counsellor, how would you explain the steps of the decision-making process? What would you do to ensure that Charles is ready for decision-making?

   ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

2. List and provide examples of several particularly useful skills within EXPLAIN DECISION-MAKING STEPS of the Decision-Making Strategy.

a) ______________________________

____

b) ______________________________

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c) ______________________________

____

d) ______________________________

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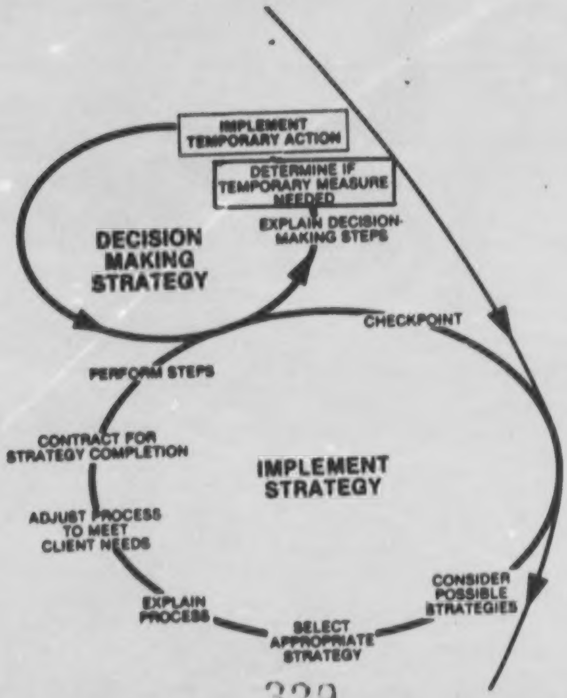
2. Determine if Temporary Measure is Needed

3. Implement Temporary Action


IMPLEMENT TEMPORARY ACTION
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IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST PROCESS TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Counsellor	Client
1. Does my client have time to search and decide?	1. Do I have time to search and decide?
2. Does my client need an action to allow him/her time to search and decide?	2. Do I know how to search and decide?

Sometimes, clients are under enormous time and financial pressures and the result is a sense of "panic". Something has to be done now, there is no time to look reasonably and rationally at alternatives for the long-run. The short-run is simply too urgent. Sometimes this is the case. The client may not have time and may be too distressed with the present to sit back and look carefully at options.

On the other hand, clients frequently over-react to problems and their panic is not necessary or appropriate. Often what is needed is some temporary measure to reduce the pressures and allow for the time to search, explore and decide. Temporary measures may be very diverse - for example, temporary financial aid, a temporary place to stay, a short-term part-time job, short-term counselling through a community agency etc.

It is important to note that a temporary measure is not always necessary but it should be discussed and the possibility explored. When deciding if one is applicable, explore with your client the scope of the urgency he/she is experiencing relative to the concerns. Discuss the necessity for a temporary measure, the consequences of instituting a temporary solution and what possibilities exist to provide temporary relief. Your client's non-verbal as well as verbal behaviour will provide some clues relative to the desirability of taking some action. Think about Nancy for a moment.

We already know that when Nancy appeared for employment counselling she stated that she was exhausted and felt she was losing control. Now let us suppose that when Nancy walked into your office you were at once struck by her haggard appearance despite her attractiveness. Not only was she fatigued looking but her movements were slow and listless. Her speech was slow and tired and she sighed heavily and frequently.

Let's assume that following the counsellor's initial structuring Nancy responded as follows:

> "It sounds good but can't we do it all today? I just can't spend a lot of time talking about this. Maybe you could just tell me what I should give up and give me a list of employers and I'll do it myself". (sighs heavily)

Nancy is approaching this decision with the same frenzied pace that she is living each week. The chances of her taking good decisions are poor. It will just be one more responsibility to add to an already too full schedule. Look at the following dialogue in which the possibility of a temporary measure is introduced:

Counsellor: It seems really urgent for you that we reach a solution quickly.

Nancy : Yes it is, I've just got so much to do, I can't squeeze many times like this in.

Counsellor: I certainly understand that you're feeling some panic to get everything resolved as soon as possible. But I'm very concerned that if we hurry too much, you might make the wrong decision. For instance I might have suggested cutting out volunteer work but now that you've told me how much that means to you, I certainly wouldn't suggest it so quickly. And the decisions to be taken have to be taken by you Nancy. I can't take them for you. Only you can decide what you have to keep and what you can give up.

Nancy : So I guess you can't help me.

Counsellor: Well I think we could work together but I think we need some time to work effectively. Nancy, could I make a suggestion?

Nancy : Sure, go ahead.

Counsellor: Well, sometimes when we're in the throes of trying to decide, everything seems to speed up and become much more urgent. Sometimes we don't make the time available that we need to decide well. Right now, you're entertaining three times a week, volunteer work one night a week, attending courses one other night a week plus two full time jobs at home and at work. What would you think, if just as a temporary measure, you called a halt to everything other than home and work for two weeks. Just say that's it for two weeks and I'm going to take that time to think through my decisions. I can take everything back up again in two weeks if I want to but right now I need some relaxed time to think and decide. What do you think?

Nancy : Gee I don't know. The family, especially my mother, really counts on Sunday dinner and my volunteer work - I don't know if they could manage without me.

Counsellor: Have you never missed a single night of volunteering?

Nancy : Well, a few times when one of my boys was sick, but not often.

Counsellor: And did they manage?

Nancy : Well, yes they did. I guess what you're saying makes sense.

Counsellor: What would you have to do, what arrangements would you have to make in order to call halt for two weeks?

Nancy : Well, first etc. etc.

In this above example, Nancy needed a temporary measure, an action to allow some breathing space. Had the counsellor pushed forward to trying to help Nancy decide in one meeting the results would likely not have been productive. With a temporary measure in place, at least the possibility of a good decision exists and the client's environment is more conducive to making decisions.

The counsellor has again been guided by the mental questions of discovering if the client has the time to decide and if not, what he/she needs to permit decision-making.

You will notice in Table 1, that in addition to mild probing, listening and reinforcement, the technique of contracting is again listed. Recall from Chapter 2 that the contract between Nancy and her counsellor would appear as follows:

CONTRACT BETWEEN MRS. THOMPSON AND NANCY

STARTING DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 1981

Counselling Goal: To re-structure my time commitments so I am able to begin actively searching for a new job.

Employment Target: To reduce my home, work and community commitments within the next three weeks so much that I can develop a list of possible employers and an interview plan fully within this time period.

Action Steps to be Taken	Person Responsible

At this point it may be very useful to begin putting in writing the agreements made between Nancy and her counsellor. It is difficult to predict how much progress will be made in this one interview but for illustrative purposes, the following would indicate good progress:

1.	To call and cancel my community and entertaining commitments for the next 14 days.	Nancy
2.	To make a list of all possible alternatives available and to bring this list for discussion at our next meeting.	Mrs. T and Nancy
3.	To begin a list of possible employers for discussion.	Mrs. T.

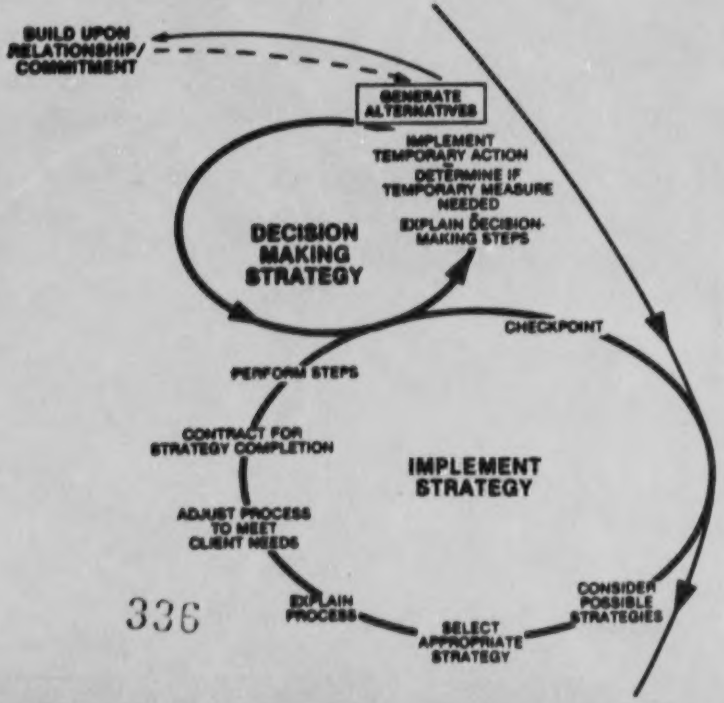
As indicated earlier, formal writing of all activities is not essential with all clients but verbal agreement is. With Nancy, however, the benefits of a written contract are obvious. With so many activities to sidetrack her, a written record will assist to keep her on target and to keep her committed to the defined tasks between sessions with the counsellor.

EXERCISE III

Celeste Joyaux is looking for a job but is having more immediate problems because she is losing her apartment. Concern about a place to live has taken time and energy away from job seeking. Celeste would like to find someone to share an apartment with, but that will take some time. She needs to find a place to live immediately.

What step in decision-making is required? Outline how you would introduce this step?

4. Generate Alternatives


BUILD UPON RELATIONSHIP/ COMMITMENT
GENERATE ALTERNATIVES
IMPLEMENT TEMPORARY ACTION
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EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Counsellor And Client

Have all alternatives known to both of us been identified?

The process of generating alternatives involves listing all of the possible courses of action you and your client can identify as a means of achieving the employment counselling target. Initially, no means is too far out to be considered. The activities associated with this step are less complex and therefore may seem less significant than those required in the goal identification stage of the employment counselling process; however, appearances are deceiving! The act of generating alternatives is a critical one in that it sets the stage for the entire decision-making process. The remaining steps all operate on the alternatives identified in this phase.

In deciding what to do, it seems obvious enough that you and your client should be aware of the various courses of action available. In fact, most clients have probably considered a few options before seeking assistance, and you can then assist them to supplement these alternatives. However, the range of client ability to generate alternatives is very great indeed. Some clients are genuinely unable to state any alternatives at all. Regardless of a client's ability to generate alternatives, your role is to first help your client to think for him/herself.

Creativity, on the part of you and a client, is both necessary and appropriate. You should be able to suggest options of which your client may be unaware, and/or stimulate a client to seek further alternatives that have not occurred to either of you. Under usual circumstances, the alternative courses of action developed for consideration are a product of shared responsibility of both you and your client.

Neither you nor your client should judge the quality, costs, benefits, or probable outcomes of the alternatives at this point. Both of you should use your imagination to think of all possible alternatives; evaluation will come at a later stage. The reasoning behind this point should be obvious. If a client thinks of several alternatives and your response is, "I don't think that would work", the chances are that most clients would, to be blunt, shut up. At the same time this is not to say that you should encourage your clients to seriously consider frivolous alternatives. Both you and your clients should use your imaginations to think of all possible alternatives; evaluation will come later in the process.

There are many techniques to assist counsellors and clients to generate alternatives. The most common and perhaps most familiar is Brainstorming. Brainstorming is a series of rapid-fire client and counsellor ideas that create as many ideas about a given topic as can be generated. Attention is not given to details, the relative merits of a possibility or the likelihood of its attainment.

Example:

Counsellor: We'll try to think of as many solutions/jobs/possibilities/options as we can that you might consider. We're just making a list of our ideas and can consider them in detail later. Right now, let's be creative and think of as many possibilities as we can. You start and we'll both throw in ideas until we have a lot to choose from.

Two additional and perhaps less familiar techniques are as follows:

Alternated suggestion -- A counsellor response used to increase client involvement in the generation of alternatives. The counsellor offers a suggestion, then the client makes a suggestion. This alternation continues. This is particularly useful if clients are having difficulty finding ideas. One idea tends to stimulate another.

Example:

Counsellor: Let's both try to think of people we could ask about the job in a health care facility. I'll think of one, then you think of one, and so on. Well, first, I suppose you could ask Mr. Abbott. You said he used to be the manager of a store. Who else could you contact?

Paired suggestions -- A counsellor response that offers two contrasting possibilities for the client to consider. Used when the client wants counsellor advice and the counsellor wants to provide support, yet wants to involve the client actively and wants the client to assume more responsibility.

Example:

Client : I'm overwhelmed. I don't know where to start. What would you do, Mrs. Wolf?

Counsellor: We have plenty of ideas to work with. One way of getting started would be to think through all the ideas very carefully. But another approach would be to start with two or three that seem especially appealing. Which sounds best to you, Jim?

In addition, the use of Dreaming can be most useful, particularly with clients who are too limiting in their consideration of alternatives as a means of helping them generate a broader range of possibilities. (See Chapter 2 to recall this technique). Let us imagine the results of a brainstorming technique with Nancy and the list of possible alternatives which might be generated:

1. Give up all extra activities except social ones I enjoy (family dinner, entertaining once in a while) for the next few years.
2. Give up all activities except social ones I enjoy and volunteer work.

3. Look for a job with a 4-day work week and keep all my activities.
4. Get a housekeeper for cleaning and preparing some meals.
5. Look for a job where they'll train me on the job so I can get ahead without night courses.
6. Take two months off, after I'm laid off, to rest and begin to look full-time for a new job.
7. Sell the house, move into a cheaper one and quit working.
8. Get more help from my husband and maybe my mother so I can keep up with everything.
9. Forget about taking courses until the kids are older and I have more time.
10. Work part-time only and keep all my other interests and activities.

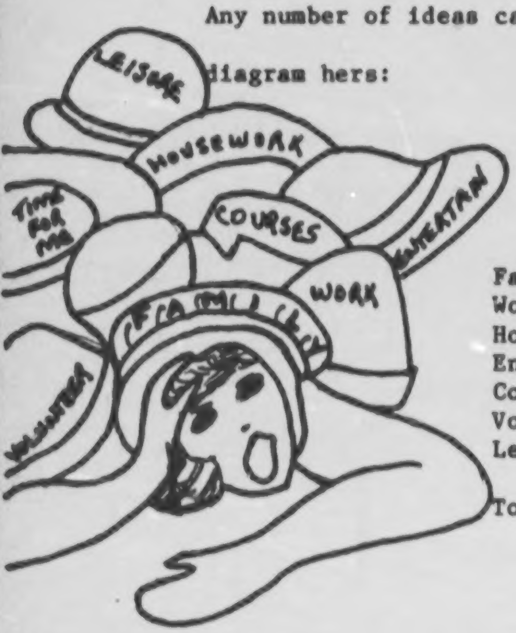
Some of these options may be completely unrealistic for Nancy, for financial and/or personal reasons. This, however, is not relevant at this point. The importance of brainstorming or any other technique for generating alternatives is to assist clients to recognize that there are options available. Often, when in the midst of decisions, it is hard to see that any options exist and this blocks both progress and rational thought. Nancy may reject many or indeed most of these options but, in the process of doing so, she will recognize that there are usually several solutions to a presenting problem. This in itself is encouraging and places clients in a better frame of mind for rational problem-solving and decision-making. Another advantage of alternative generation is that it allows one to be a little ridiculous. Counsellors need not be afraid of humour. It provides welcome relief from the intensity of decision-making and again contributes to a better and more relaxed frame of mind to tackle decisions. For example, Nancy might have suggested "I could always sell the kids" or "I could serve everybody TV dinners". Go with suggestions such as these and laugh (assuming she doesn't mean them!). This type of alternative will not survive the next step of examining the appropriateness of alternatives but they may make that step a little more fun and likely more productive.

The following is a checklist to assist in generating alternatives:

1. Reinforce motivation to generate alternatives by stressing that the client has the potential to identify alternatives.
2. Rule out criticism of initial alternatives, concentrate on building a list first, then evaluate.
3. Reinforce both alternatives suggested by client and efforts to produce alternatives.
4. Quantity of suggestions is sought, even far-fetched alternatives. Do not force humour, but if it happens, encourage it.
5. Identify external sources of alternatives beyond the counsellor-client dyad and coach the client to consult them and report findings. (Peers, postings, books, films, newspapers, classes, family, etc.).

6. Suggest alternatives from own experience or from knowledge of what other clients have done. It is essential that this procedure be carefully presented as what might be done not what should or must be done.
7. Diagram the problem and alternatives. Certain clients are stimulated in their thinking and motivated to "figure-out" solutions when they are encouraged to draw a diagram of their problem-situation (or when the counsellor works out a diagram), (or when they jointly produce a diagram). (See sample diagram for Nancy below)
8. Explore the consequences of not finding alternatives.

Clients can be encouraged to be creative in diagramming the problem and alternatives. Counsellors can learn about clients from what clients diagram. Any number of ideas can be tried. This is just one sample of how Nancy might diagram hers:



	Hours Per Week	Solutions
Family	30	List alternatives
Work	40	
Housework/Shopping	8	
Entertaining	12	
Courses	3	
Volunteer work	3	
Leisure time	none	
Total =	NOT ENOUGH	

EXERCISE IV

1. Refer back to Charles Duguay in Exercise II who was considering moving to another province to find work. He sees only two options: (a) staying where he is and continuing looking for work, or (b) moving to another province and hoping more job opportunities will present themselves.

   If he were your client, what other alternatives could you suggest?

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   ____

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2. Why is the generation of alternatives such an important step within the decision-making process?

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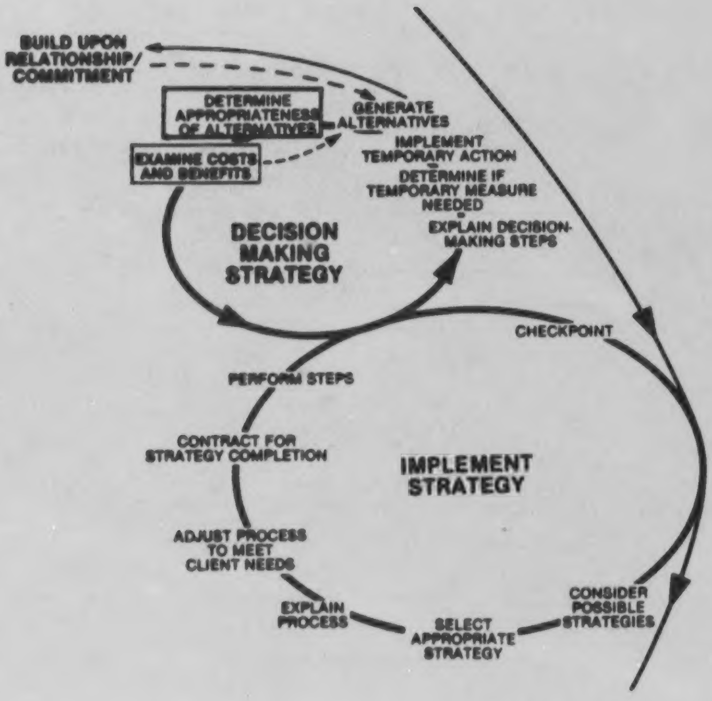
   ____

   ____

   ____


BUILD UPON RELATIONSHIP/ COMMITMENT
DETERMINE APPROPRIATENESS OF ALTERNATIVES
EXAMINE COSTS AND BENEFITS
GENERATE ALTERNATIVES
IMPLEMENT TEMPORARY ACTION
DETERMINE IF TEMPORARY MEASURE NEEDED
EXPLAIN DECISION-MAKING STEPS
DECISION MAKING STRATEGY
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST PROCESS TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

3. Describe and provide examples of the following: brainstorming, alternated suggestions, paired suggestions.

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____

____

____

____

____

5. Determine Appropriateness of Alternatives.

6. Examine Costs and Benefits.

Counsellor and Client

Have the pros and cons of each alternative been examined?

The process of evaluating alternatives takes place in two steps. The first is to eliminate those alternatives which are, for all practical purposes, not within reach. Most clients can readily do this although they may need some counsellor prompting and encouragement.

In Nancy's example, the counsellor simply asked her to read through the list and discard those alternatives she felt were impossible and if she were willing, to comment on why she rejected each one. The following resulted:

- "Giving up everything except what I enjoy seems pretty selfish. I don't know about that. Maybe I could reduce but I wouldn't feel right just doing what pleased me.
- I feel the same about number 2 except if I keep my volunteer work, at least I'm doing something for others.
- A four-day work week sounds great. I'd like to look into that.
- We can forget the housekeeper idea. Day care already costs a fortune. I can't add any more expenses, especially not now. No, reject number 4.
- I don't know of any places where they'll give me training, but I suppose it's not a bad idea. It doesn't really solve much though.
- I'm not sure we could afford number 6 but it sure seems like a good idea to me.
- I won't even consider number 7. We've worked too hard to get this far for me to throw it in just because I'm tired and can't seem to cope.
- I couldn't ask my mother. I just don't know. My husband does a lot already. I can't ask him to do more. Well I suppose I could, but I wouldn't feel very good doing it.
- Number 9 makes sense I suppose. I guess there's time to think about getting ahead a little later.
- Part-time work - no way at part-time salaries. I might be able to reduce my income a bit but not 50%. We'd never make ends meet. Well that's it how did I do?"

Nancy has, with a first glance, reduced the alternatives to be considered from ten to six and she has expressed enthusiasm about looking in detail at four alternatives. She has begun the important task of narrowing down and is ready to begin to explore the consequences of each remaining alternative.

Exploring the consequences is the crux of the next step. What are the consequences to me and to those important to me if I implement alternative 1, 2, 3 etc.? The more the consequences of a decision bring positive gain to oneself and significant others, the more likely it is that a "good" decision will be made and implemented; conversely, the more the consequences are negative, the less likely it is a "good" decision and that it will be implemented. Sounds simple in theory, but in practice, as all of us who have faced tough decisions know, sorting through the consequences is not easy.

What factors does one consider in evaluating consequences? These will vary from client to client both in terms of what factors and how many.

Some factors to be considered are:

1. Time. The first factor that can be discussed is the amount of time your client has available before a decision must be implemented. Some clients may have two or more months in which to decide, while others may have only two weeks. For example, some clients will come to you months before college applications are due, and you then have ample time in which to discuss the client's alternatives. Other clients may come to you at the last minute. This has a clear impact on what alternatives make sense to consider.

You may also want to consider how much time it will take your client to implement each alternative. A client may want, for example, to go into the field of electronics. In this case, there are many alternatives. The client could get training in the military; go to a community college, or perhaps obtain on-the-job training. All of these alternatives will require varying amounts of time to implement.

2. Interests. When investigating your client's interests, relate the alternatives to what your client likes and dislikes, or what your client enjoys doing or does not relish doing. Explore your client's interests, the reasons for and the implications of the interests. Assess whether or not interests will remain constant over an extended period of time. As with the ability to generate alternatives, clients' awareness of what holds their interest may vary. Some clients have only limited knowledge of themselves, and it is your responsibility to expand their awareness. You can accomplish this through discussion, testing, or any other appropriate method. Let's consider two examples involving longevity of interest.

First, many times a client will list an alternative as a possible solution to a decision, but after discussing it with you, realize that the alternative would not hold interest over a long period of time. A client may have the skills and abilities to perform a particular job, but your client's job satisfaction may decline after a year or two because of insufficient interest in the chosen field.

Second, it is necessary to explore your client's interests and their implications. A client who is experiencing conflict at home may express genuine interest in only one alternative, i.e., getting a job now to pay for an apartment. What does this person want? Is this client interested in the job, or in merely escaping from the current environment? While a job may provide some immediate relief, will the client's interest remain? Answers to these and other questions will enable you and your client to determine your client's interests and, therefore, assist in making a decision.

3. Values. When the alternative is assessed in relation to a client's values, consider whether the alternative involves factors that would either conflict with or accommodate your client's value structure. Some clients know what values are important to them, and others are constantly undergoing an "identity crisis" and functioning in a world of uncertainty. It is your responsibility to provide an opportunity for clients to clarify their values so that appropriate decisions can be made. It will be self-evident to you that counsellors do not impose their own values. This is not always easy, especially when clients either do not know their own values or when their expressed values conflict with one's own. Perhaps some of you reacted to Nancy's value structure as she began to reject alternatives. She seemed to be expressing some very traditional values concerning her role and the demands she was willing to meet. Certainly Nancy's value system will have to be considered by her in order to arrive at a decision with which she can comfortably live. Counsellors are free to challenge and to stimulate thought as in "Nancy, have you considered X, Y or Z", but are

not free to use "shoulds", "oughts" or "musts" which reflect their own value structure. These will not assist clients to develop and decisions consistent with their own value systems.

4. Skills and Abilities. A client's skills and abilities can impact heavily on realistic decisions. A client who wishes to become a surgeon may simply not have the intellectual or psychomotor skills that are necessary. Or, a client may desire very much to become a science teacher, but a check of school records may indicate that your client's ability in math and science is below average. The probability, then, of this client becoming a science teacher is low and perhaps a related field could be considered.

5. Psychological Factors. A client's affective traits impact strongly on what decisions he/she will feel comfortable taking and what risks he/she is willing to undertake. One's self-concept, persistence in accomplishing tasks, confidence, need for social approval, leadership ability, ability to take criticism may be important factors in evaluating alternatives.

6. Environmental Factors. Environmental factors can be extremely important. Included here would be a discussion of factors such as your client's family background, financial resources, and societal expectations and demands. Your client's perceptions of these factors can be assessed. You and your client can determine whether the environment will permit the alternative to be attained. For example, a client's financial resources may simply not permit any type of further education at the current time.

Physical environmental factors can also be considered. For example, your client may not like the environment of a small school, a warm climate, a sterile office or a sprawling warehouse. Such factors can influence many of your client's decisions.

The difficulty is not so much in knowing what factors a client might consider in evaluating alternatives but rather what factors a client might exclude.

A balance-sheet is a useful technique to help clients to sort through consequences of specific alternatives.

It can be administered by yourself, filled-out by your client, or simply used as a guide in discussing alternatives. Given that certain consequences are delayed and others are non-observable, this task is perhaps one of the most difficult in the decision-making process. You and your client cannot possibly predict all the consequences of every given action. There is a certain amount of risk in making any decision. Yet, although one is never sure of the outcome of any decision, it is possible for you to help your client to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs involved in making a decision.

A sample of Nancy's partially completed balance sheet follows for illustration. Of the factors listed earlier, Nancy chose to consider each alternative in terms of her values, her interests and practical realities. She listed her values, interests and practicalities as they related to this decision in descending order of importance. As much as possible, she wanted her choice to be consistent with these factors. These she listed on the left hand side of the page. Across the top, she listed the remaining alternatives and began to answer the questions "If I were to accept this alternative, what would the consequences be in terms of each factor. Would it be a positive or negative consequence?"

Notice that through this process, Nancy is beginning to ask important questions of herself. She is now wondering whether a 4 day work week is a viable solution or whether she would end up doing more and having less energy as a result. Notice too that no one alternative is likely to emerge all positive or all negative. The thinking process is however clarifying and those factors that are fundamentally important for Nancy are beginning to emerge.

A second balance sheet, using different client factors is also provided for illustration to point out that many possibilities exist for using balance-sheeting. Furthermore it need not be a counsellor-client activity. It can be given as an assignment to a client between sessions to begin to focus thinking on choice and consequences of choice.

NANCY'S BALANCE SHEET

	KEEP VOLUNTEER WORK/ REDUCE EVERYTHING ELSE	4 DAY WORK WEEK AND KEEP EVERYTHING ELSE	2 MONTHS OFF WHILE JOB HUNTING	POSTPONE COURSES UNTIL LATER	GET MORE ASSISTANCE
ALTERNATIVES POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES	I	II	III	IV	V
A. Values					
1. Time for my husband, kids and family.	+	?	+		
2. Want to feel I contribute financially.	+	?	-		
3. To look after my mom and inlaws - they're old and lonely.	-	+	+		
4. Some time to do what I like.	+and-	+	+		
B. Interests					
1. Time for my children.	+	+	+		
2. Volunteer work.	+	+	-		
3. Keeping my home so I'm proud of it.	+	+	+		
4. Executive secretary - course work.	-	+	-		...etc
C. Practicality					
1. Financial: Must reduce mortgage	+	+	-		
2. Health: Must have more left-over energy	+ and -	?	+		
TOTAL					

GUIDE TO EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES (Balance Sheeting)

ANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES	ALTERNATIVE 1		ALTERNATIVE 2		ALTERNATIVE 3	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
A. Gains/losses for myself.						
1. Income						
2. Interest value of work.						
3. Convenience to home.						
4. etc.						
B. Gains/losses for others close to me.						
1. Wife could reduce work.						
2. Son could continue going to school.						
3. etc.						
C. Self-esteem.						
1. See myself as good provider.						
2. Able to do "important" work.						
3. Self-image as team worker.						
4. etc.						
D. Social approval.						
1. From spouse.						
2. From friends.						
3. From peers.						
4. From employer.						
5. etc.						
TOTAL						

Each balance sheet includes a total at the bottom of the page for clients to simply add the +'s and -'s. It is not to be concluded that the alternative with the most +'s will necessarily be the client's choice nor that it necessarily should be. We can never treat decision-making as a totally rational process. The totals do however serve to further clarify and to eliminate alternatives which may no longer look appealing.

It is very important that a client be coaxed to critically examine and evaluate the remaining alternatives. To encourage a realistic appraisal, it is often necessary to (gently) confront the client with discrepancies in his/her appraisal. In Chapter 3, we discussed a three-stage model of confrontation - paraphrase; experiential statement; open-ended questions. Just to review for a moment, a gentle confrontation with Nancy might be as follows:

Counsellor: Nancy, if I understood well the target we were working on, it was to implement changes in your commitments so that you would have more coping energy generally as well as energy for a new job which is really important to you. (paraphrases).

Nancy : That's right (confirms).

Counsellor: Well Nancy, on the one hand you say you must implement changes, but each time we look at any of your commitments, you indicate that you really can't give any up. (States the discrepancy). I wonder if we're really working on what you want to achieve. What do you think about what I've just said? (Asks open-ended question, giving initiative back to Nancy and prompting a problem-solving attitude).

Mild confrontation is not always necessary and is to be used cautiously and gently. In Nancy's case, as developed so far, it likely would not be necessary at all. When necessary however it can be a very useful technique to re-focus on the decision task. The decision at all times rests with the client but the atmosphere in which decisions are looked at critically and realistically is the counsellor's responsibility.

EXERCISE V

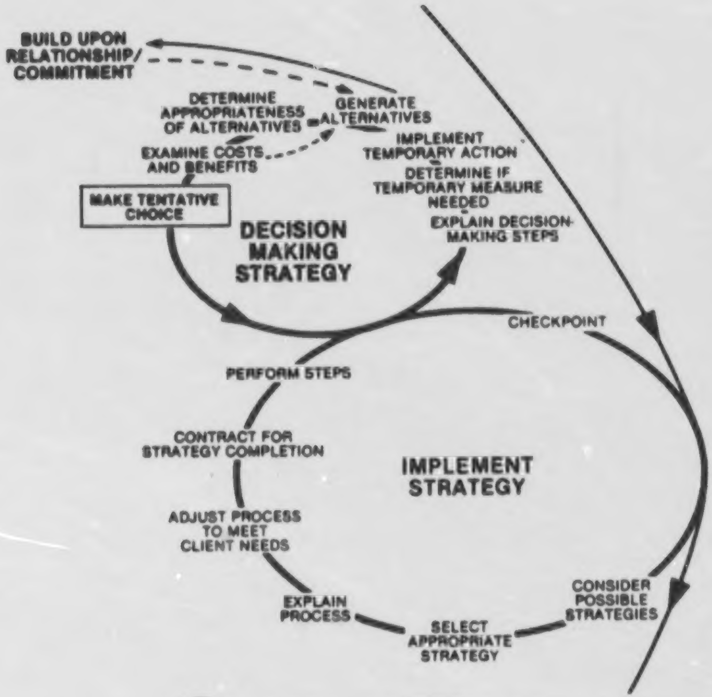
1. Jack Lacey is trying to decide whether or not to give up a full-time job to take a part-time job and return to school to become an auto mechanic. The job he holds is unskilled and does not promise much opportunity for advancement, but it is steady and provides a moderately good income. It is difficult deciding whether or not to give up the job and go back to school.

Outline the factors you would encourage Jack to consider to help him assess the appropriateness of going back to school as an option.

2. For Jack Lacey, there are costs and benefits involved in quitting his job and going back to school. Make two lists, one of the costs of this option and the other of the benefits.

3. Given the information you have provided above, set up a balance-sheet for Jack Lacey.

7. Make a Tentative Choice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Counsellor

1. Has my client chosen the most promising alternative?
2. Is the choice consistent with his/her important factors?
3. Will environmental factors permit the decision to work?

Client

1. Shall I implement the best alternative?
2. Shall I let others know

At long last, the moment of choice! You will recall that at the beginning of this chapter, we discussed the fact that not much is known about what occurs at the actual moment of choice. The client's choice will very often be the one which now appears most reasonable, most likely to succeed, most rational and with the most positive consequences. But it will not always be so. The choice further may not be made in your office. Many clients may, at this point, want to take their balance sheet with them, reflect in private and inform you of their tentative choice later. This is to be encouraged. Since we don't know what happens at that moment, we are certainly better to let it happen and not interfere by trying to hurry the process. Without being overly dramatic, it is true that at the moment of decision, the decider is alone.

The counsellor role is to hear and encourage the decision and to verify with the client that he/she sees the choice as consistent with his/her important factors and that his/her environment will make the decision possible. The client's role is to decide. You may wonder about the client question listed above - "Shall I let others know?" Very often (not always), a strong indication that we have made an important decision is that it is no longer a hidden decision. Significant others are told. In Nancy's case, when she, in-person, cancels commitments, asks for extra assistance, she is no longer thinking about it - she is doing it.

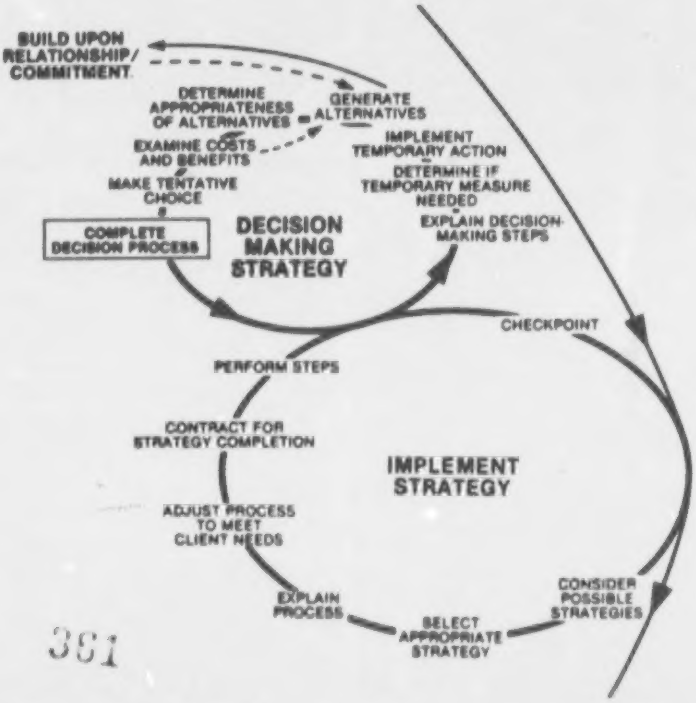
The use of "tentative" is also deliberate. Very few decisions in life are final and completely irreversible. While client commitment to the decision is essential and to be encouraged, the door should be open to re-examining the decision later if it doesn't work for whatever reason.

Let's look at Nancy's tentative decision. She decided several things:

- To reduce entertaining to Sunday family dinners and twice monthly.
- To postpone evening courses until the children are older.
- To compile with the counsellor, a list of companies offering 4 day work weeks.
- If a 4 day work week proved not possible, to request more assistance around the house and as a last resort, to give up volunteer work if necessary.
- To use her 2 week earned vacation period to search full-time for a new job and to take one month off to rest before starting.

The counsellor at this point would be wise to summarize the work done together and to verbally reinforce and encourage Nancy's growth from feeling she was losing control initially to having taken some difficult decisions and moved towards being back in control.

8. Complete Decision Process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Counsellor

1. Has my client developed a plan to implement his/her decision?
2. Have we planned a follow-up procedure as well as a plan to maintain client commitment in the face of stress and negative feedback?

Client

1. Do I know how to adhere to my plan even if I get negative feedback?
2. Are the risks serious if I don't adhere to my plan?

Next to the actual taking of the decision, the final step of completing the decision process can be considered the most crucial. The questions above, in support of this statement are self-explanatory. A decision, after much procrastination, to study harder and improve grades is a big step forward. However, if one doesn't know how to study, the decision may be very short-lived. This final step is a planning step to guide the client when required, through the action steps of implementing the decision, to anticipate if you will, the future. Some clients may be able to do it on their own and express no hesitancy about moving ahead. Others may express considerable hesitancy. In all cases, it should be checked. This can be done through sensitive probing and through open-ended leads. For example:

> "Jim, have you thought about how you will react if your boss refuses your plan?"

"As you look at these steps, is there anything you're afraid might go wrong?" "Getting the support of your friends in this seems very important to you Brenda. What do you think you'd do if they don't think it's such a good idea?" etc.

The purpose of this is not to anticipate or predict failure. Rather it is to expose your client to the possibility that deciding and implementing may be different, that there may be disappointments and to begin planning how to handle disappointments or set-backs should they occur.

The written contract is an excellent base for discussion as each action step can be discussed in this manner. Providing the client with a copy of the contract is both reinforcing and a reminder of the contingency plans discussed.

Because a contract -
(a) initiates client action
(b) establishes criteria for success
(c) establishes reciprocal commitment between counsellor and client
(d) clarifies consequences (negative and positive) of working towards and achieving a goal
(e) provides a record of agreement, and
(f) provides guidelines for carrying out a plan

it is a motivating reminder of the entire process, decision, and plan for success.

To conclude with Nancy, a copy of her contract would be very useful. The following areas (perhaps you can think of more) would also be very helpful to explore:

- Whether she has thought of how she will stop entertaining. Will she explain; just stop inviting; will her husband be supportive; if he is initially angry, will she back-up?
- How will she plan to use her month off in order to make certain she does rest? Is she likely to feel guilty if she rests? If so, how will she handle that?

It is not necessary that counsellors have the answers to these questions but it may be very necessary that they pose them.

This type of exploration can only be done effectively when the counselling relationship has been maintained and strengthened throughout the decision-making process. The client must know that the counsellor is acting out of genuine care and concern for the client's success. All methods which the counsellor uses to help the client maintain a plan of action can be guided by these principles:

(a) Call the client's attention to not only the positive consequences of a particular course of action but also to potential losses or risks. A client will frequently discount or forget negative considerations in order to bolster his/her chosen course of action. The counsellor should firmly but gently present his/her own views about risks and provide whatever objective information is available.

(b) Encourage the client to work out ways of gaining emotional support and realistic reassurance in the face of negative feedback. The counsellor can remind and reinforce the client's personal assets, and remind the client of potential supporting resources such as spouse, peers, priest, etc.

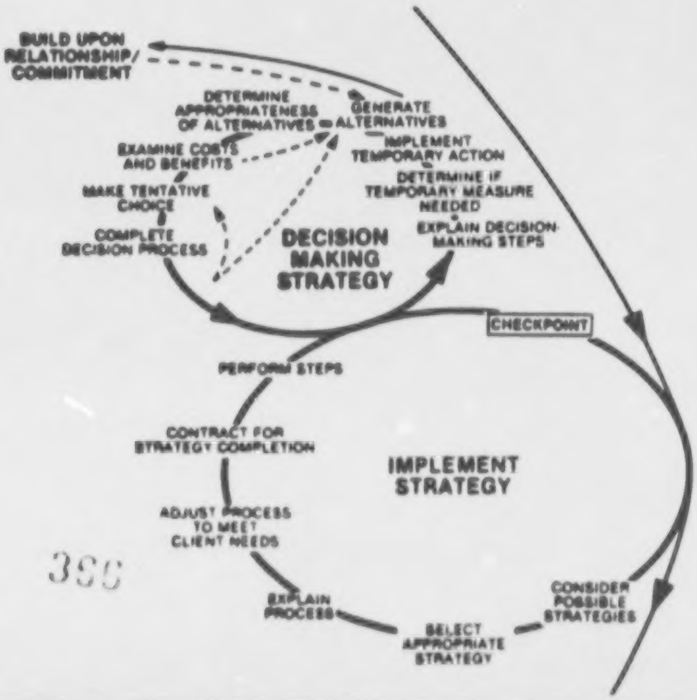
(c) Supplement the client's attempt to arrive at support and reassurance by supplying him/her with supplementary information and suggestions about how setbacks and negative feedback can be effectively met or their effects at least mitigated (for example, letting the client know that emergency counselling is available if needed; or other expert opinion can be sought if that becomes necessary).

These principles constitute a preparatory message to help the client build a basic attitude of hope together with information which will have a supportive and motivating effect during times of stress during the action implementation stage of problem solving and decision-making.

EXERCISE VI

Continuing with the example of Jack Lacey who has been considering quitting his job and going back to school, what would be some action plans to implement a choice to go back to school? Suggest some steps that he could take to minimize the costs of this decision. What areas might you explore with Jack to ensure that he is prepared for possible set-backs?

Checkpoint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Counsellor

Have I paused momentarily to recall that all steps of this stage of Systematic Employment Counselling have been covered?

If all steps have not been covered, have I returned to those steps needing attention.

Because you have already been introduced to Checkpoint in both the DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET as well as IMPLEMENT STRATEGY stages of Systematic Employment Counselling, little need be added here other than to say that if all the steps within the Decision-making Strategy have been completed to your satisfaction, you are then ready to move on. If not you would return to any identified uncompleted step before continuing.

A Note on the use of Information in Decision-Making

Information is indispensible in making well-considered decisions. The use of available information helps a decision-maker to identify concerns, suggest alternatives, evaluate alternatives, and finally to make the decision. An important function in employment counselling is to help clients to obtain accurate information about themselves and their environment so that better decisions can be made and more effective courses of action taken. Thus, it may be necessary at some point during the decision counselling process to suspend temporarily the decision-making process and, instead, focus upon seeking information. Information can be provided through structured experiences, reference materials, or resource people. Any or all of these information seeking methods may be used. Keep in mind that parents, friends, referral sources and the client-counsellor interaction itself may be valuable sources of information. Information seeking has been elaborated upon in Chapter 4 so you may want to review your notes.

Decision-Making as a Systematic Employment Counselling Strategy

Throughout this chapter, we have presented an 8 step decision-making strategy. We have presented this strategy by following the flow of critical counsellor and client questions which guide the process from initiation to termination. As in the chapter on Employment Targets, these critical questions occur within systematic steps and together they provide the blueprint to guide client and counsellor through a specific strategy. This procedure is consistent in all stages of Systematic Employment Counselling.

Let us look at this strategy within the context of the total model by taking another look at Figure 1.

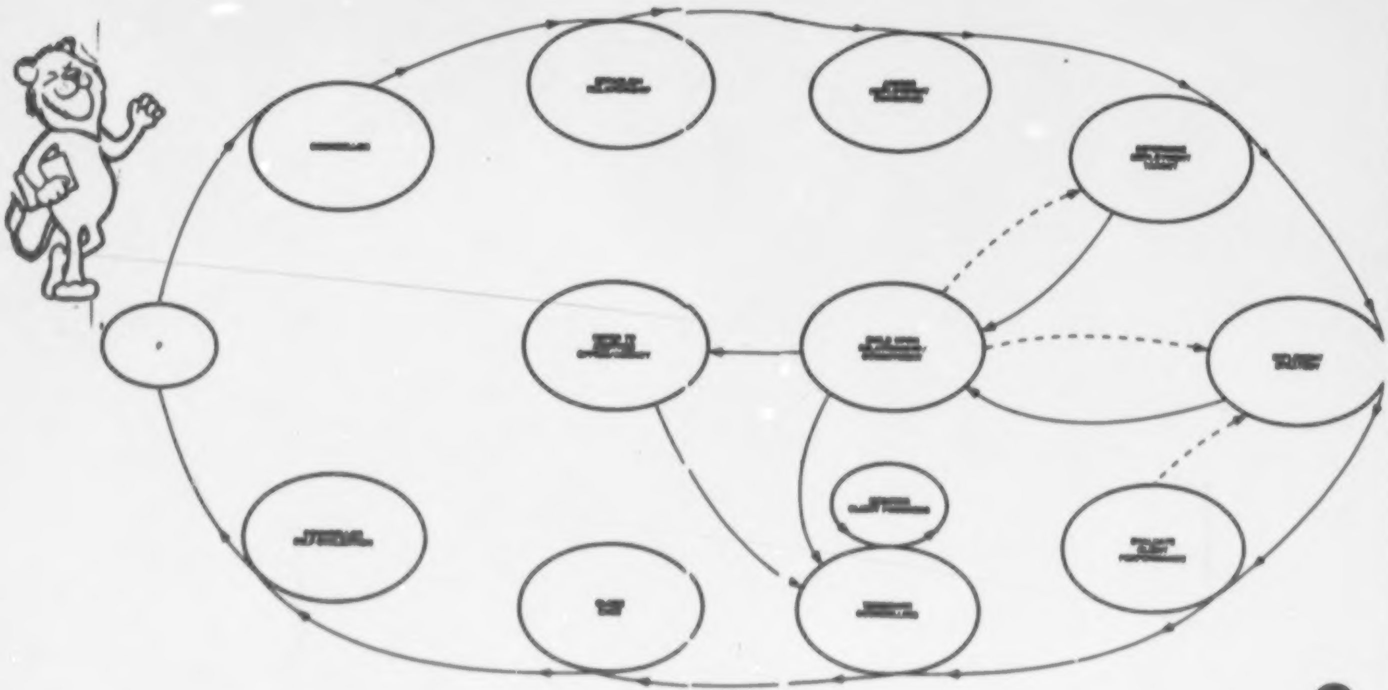

Figure 1. Overview of Systematic Employment Counselling.

Observe that we have moved from the Determine Employment Target stage through the Selection and Implementation of the most appropriate strategy to suit the client's need. In this chapter, Decision-making has been the selected strategy. These stages and the steps within each stage are, as much as possible, performed consecutively. Look below at a larger version of the decision-making strategy in isolation and recall the movement with Nancy through each step.

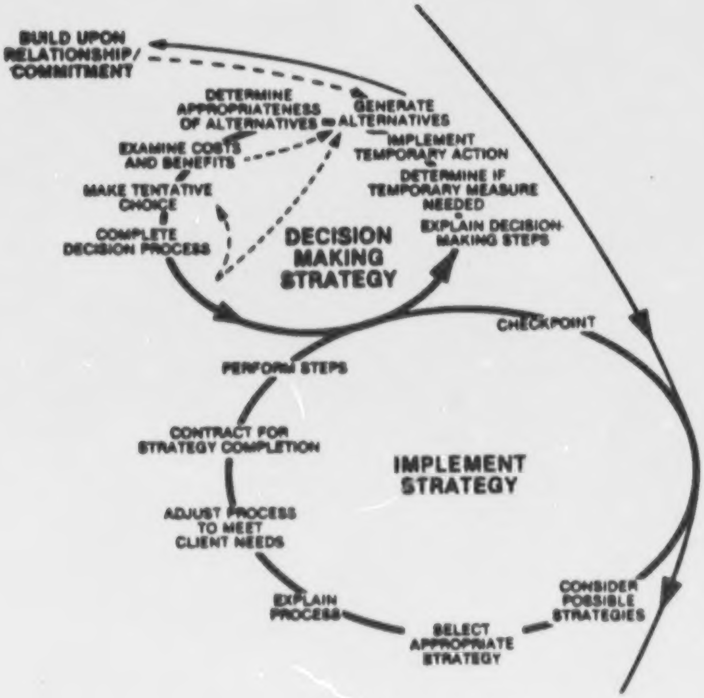
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Figure 4. Sequence of steps in Implementing a Decision-Making Strategy

The EXPLAIN DECISION-MAKING STEPS serves two purposes - to explain and structure as well as to determine client readiness for problem-solving and decision-making. The temporary measure is investigated and implemented if the client is not ready but could be given some action to alleviate pressure and make time.

After alternatives are generated and sorted for appropriateness, a more exact weighing of each takes place within the step termed EXAMINE COSTS AND BENEFITS. The product of this exact inspection of each alternative is that a firm decision is made as to whether each is retained for, or eliminated from, further consideration. At this juncture you have a special challenge. Without interjecting your own values, you are expected to assist your client in focusing upon and carefully assessing the merits of each option.

After each alternative has been examined, client and counsellor can make an important decision. Have they retained enough alternatives so that they can move forward toward making a final choice, or is there need to generate more alternatives? Note that the latter possibility is indicated on Figure 4 by the dotted line.

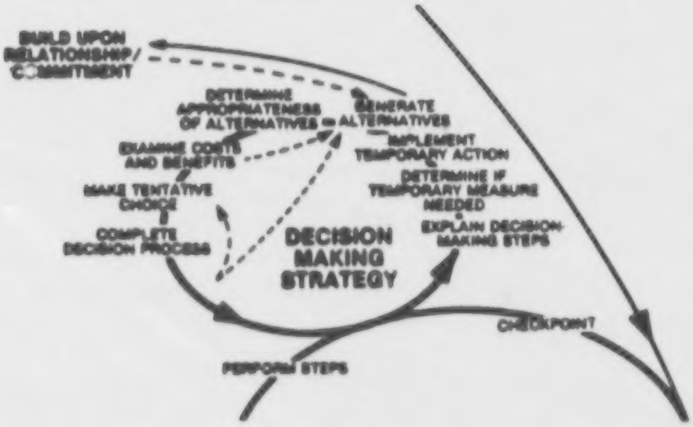
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Figure 4

Let's look at a sampling of possibilities and how the counsellor might respond to them.

Client A rejected all options that had been generated and assessed. Under careful examination, none was found to have more benefit than cost. You would then encourage Client A to generate additional alternatives. In so doing, two considerations should be kept carefully in mind. Encouragement and support may need to be given for having examined each so carefully and having been candid in their assessment. This behaviour should be rewarded and a client should feel positive about the actions taken. On the other hand, something should be learned from the sequence of actions taken. How did your client generate so many options that were found wanting? What did the cost-benefit examination tell you about your client's evaluative procedures? How can a second generation of alternatives be more positive than was the first? Frankly discussing these issues will greatly benefit your client and reduce the feeling of defeat that may result from finding nothing that is satisfactory.

Client B has been very thorough in examining each and has found only one alternative that is acceptable. You and Client B now face a critical decision. Is Client B pleased with this choice and does he/she regard it highly, or does he/she find it barely acceptable? Would Client B prefer to generate more options so that he/she has two or more that are acceptable and a genuine choice among acceptable options can be made? If more alternatives are needed, you would assist Client B in generating them, but first attend to the considerations discussed in the previous paragraph regarding helping the client to view this additional generation of choices as a positive act.

Client C has examined each alternative and found all to be acceptable. When this occurs, we wonder if Client C has been discriminating in his/her examination of choices or did, in fact, he/she find them all to be quite acceptable. Hopefully, you have spotted a casual or indiscriminating approach to cost-benefit examination rather early and helped the client to be more discriminating. Regardless, you and your client must now face the issue of whether to accept the judgments and move onto final choice or assist Client C in examining each with greater care.

Client D generated five alternatives, examined each very thoroughly and decided that benefits exceeded costs in two instances. He/she seems very pleased with the two options that remain. We therefore don't need to consider additional choices and can move directly toward making a final choice.

The four clients previously discussed all appear to be both willing and interested in working through each step of the decision-making process. In practice, of course, we find many clients who lack interest, are reluctant or even hostile at the prospect of continuing this process. In some instances these manifestations may indicate that difficulties have arisen in our relationship and we need to temporarily interrupt the decision-making process in order to learn the source of the stress and attempt to resolve it before continuing. This could occur at any point in the decision-making process, but might most predictably occur when we attempt to gain their involvement in generating alternatives. We would then return to the BUILD UPON RELATIONSHIP/COMMITMENT stage. When resolution is reached, we would assess whether or not our client is ready to address the strategy once again. Perhaps attention needs to be given to the redefinition of our employment target. We would make this adjustment before attempting to work further on decision-making.

A second possibility is that we will learn that we cannot provide the services that our client desires and the client is acutely aware of this. We may explore the issue of our relationship and our client's degree of commitment if this seems appropriate, but it may be obvious that the central issue is finding an office or agency that is better equipped to meet his/her needs and, as indicated again in Figure 4 make the referral, then close the case. That is, once referral is made, we have no need to remain in contact with the client.

A third possibility is that our client, despite prior promises, doesn't want to extend the time and effort to carry through with the decision-making process. This may not initially be stated as such, but when resistance is met, as indicated in Figure 4 we would attempt to build upon our relationship and strengthen the client's commitment. After working toward this end, if a change in client commitment or a better mutual relationship results, we may then ask our client if she/he would prefer to resume the decision-making process. An affirmative response would result in returning to this process, as indicated by the dotted line in Figure 4. Clients may have good reason to feel that they are unready or unsuited for the continuation of employment counselling, at least at this time. In such instances, we would close the case and end our contact with the client, at least for the foreseeable future.

After the final choice has been made and the decision process has been completed, we need to quickly determine whether additional strategies are necessary in order for a particular client to reach his/her target. From your earlier work with a particular client, you may feel confident that once a decision has been made, this client will need to employ no further strategy in order to reach his/her target. In such cases, you would then proceed to the next stage in the counselling sequence, EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE.

Other clients, however, may express great difficulty in getting started in the implementation of choice. Making the choice is only a part of the battle. Help, reassurance, direction, and the breaking down of the final target into a series of more immediate sub-goals may be necessary. In such instances, we would consider which of the strategies that are presented in the chapters that follow might best be employed and then begin work directly on that strategy, rather than moving on to EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE.

Summary

You have now completed this chapter on decision-making, and have at your disposal one method for helping your clients make decisions. This method may seem logical to you and you may feel as if you've "been through it all before". There's no argument with that. Nonetheless, what we've tried to do is to present a model for covering all points in the decision-making process. Hopefully, you will find that after learning and practicing with this method of decision-making, less of your time and effort will be required in trying to decide how to decide.

The importance of decisions in our everyday, "run of the mill" lives is often ignored or overlooked. But we are where we are today because of the decisions that we have made or not made in the past. Some of us, and some of our clients, have poor decision-making skills, and think that long-range planning is how to get through the weekend. Others of us plan every facet of our lives down to the day we arrive at the gravesite. Obviously our challenge as employment counsellors is to provide assistance to those who lack or don't use proper decision-making skills...a complex challenge, indeed!

Chapter 6

Learning

Overview

In the introductory chapter of this text, employment counselling was described as an educative or learning process. In this process counsellors work with clients to identify learning objectives, create conditions under which it is possible for clients to learn and/or to un-learn and set up learning plans or strategies to assist clients to achieve their objectives. In the previous chapter on decision-making, we did not discuss decision-making specifically as learning. However, as we reflect on Nancy's counselling experience, it is clear that the process was learning - learning how to regain control through specific actions and learning an approach to making decisions which she did not previously know. In one sense, we can consider all learning to be general in that it is a relatively lasting and stable change in behaviour resulting from experience. At the same time, there are specific types of learning which call for different approaches in order for learning to be maximized. In this chapter, we turn our attention to specific learning strategies.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this chapter it is expected that you will be able to:

1. Given examples of client learning situations, indicate which are representative of inadequate learning.
2. Given a series of client learning situations indicate (a) whether what has to be learned is information, skill, habits or increased motivation and (b) what each client might have to do to become more employable.
3. Given a contract written for Chapter 5, ensure that the action plans include skill demonstration, skill tryout, skill feedback, skill practice and skill assessment.
4. Given a case example, indicate how you would assess the client's skill level.
5. List the six steps in helping a client develop a skill.
6. Explain how you would assess a client's skill in presenting his/her positive qualities to a prospective employer.
7. Explain what is meant by an inappropriate habit.
8. Explain what should be attended to and described in identifying a habit.
9. Given case descriptions, outline the steps that you would suggest to help the clients to develop positive habits. Write brief counselling plans using these steps.
10. List the five steps in helping a client increase motivation.
11. Explain the rationale for a directive approach with unmotivated clients.
12. Given a case study, structure an action plan designed for increase motivation.

Focus on Learning

Learning is more than acquiring knowledge. Learning includes developing skills, changing habit patterns, increasing motivation and discovering new ways of perceiving situations and viewing self. In an employment setting, clients frequently need help in learning those things that will permit them to obtain and hold a job. They often have difficulty because they have failed to learn certain interpersonal skills, have failed to acquire habits of persistence or self-discipline or have not learned decision-making or information-seeking skills. Issues such as these can only be resolved by clients learning to take some responsibility for resolving their own difficulties and by learning to deal with these issues more effectively. To be successful with these clients, counselling will have to bring about some lasting changes (successful learning) in the client or, at least, set into motion some activities which, if completed by the client, will lead to lasting changes. Employment counsellors are not expected to teach specific job skills but there are skills and habits related to finding employment and getting along on the job that counsellors can help clients learn.

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In chapter 1 we discussed certain pre-conditions for adult learning, borrowed from Lewin. These principles are important for counsellors to keep in mind, as a kind of mental set, when assisting clients to learn. Let us recall these principles:

1. *The learning process is a common one and is not bound by classifications*. Labels such as 'deviant', 'undermotivated', 'underachiever', 'chronically unemployed', 'hard-to-place' may assist us in keeping files and records but do little to assist us to help others to learn. The *process* by which individuals learn to be highly motivated and achievement-oriented or poorly motivated and low in achievement is the same; the experiences which teach have differed. Counsellors need the orientation that all clients can learn, re-learn, unlearn and that this is a common process which does not alter according to an assigned category or label.

2. *Learning is strongly affected by the reinforcement or lack of reinforcement in our social and cultural environments*. Examples of this principle abound. An adolescent involved with a group of peers who operate by beating the system, scraping by with 50's and doing the minimum will require enormous inner strength and determination, as well as work, to become an honour student. A woman wanting to return to work but having a family who perceives her place as being working in the home faces a difficult challenge. A man who wants to return to school whose family and friends view this as ridiculous and avoiding his responsibilities may be defeated in his ambition before he starts. Counsellors cannot ignore the powerful impact of a client's environment on his/her decisions and on his/her capacity to change and learn.

3. One's capacity to learn is affected not only by experiences, old and new, but by the recognition that there is something to be learned. The most difficult individual to teach is one who believes he/she has mastered all there is to know about the subject in question. There is no openness or receptivity to the possibility of learning. The stage in counselling of proposing and examining alternatives is very important in opening the door to new learning.

4. How one perceives oneself has a powerful impact on one's openness to learning. The client who perceives him/herself as capable is much more likely to act capably (or be willing to learn those skills necessary to act capably) than the client who perceives him/herself to be a failure. It is also true of course that mastering a new skill may alter how we perceive our capabilities. Here however, we are talking about pre-conditions for learning and not the results of having learned. Perhaps the easiest example is of the couple in love, one of whom remarks, "Today I feel on top of the world. I could accomplish anything." The perception of self as loved, loving and loveable opens the door to new accomplishments. This is not of course to say that we have to be in love to learn - but it probably helps! The counselling implication is in the importance of the individual's self-esteem when setting learning tasks, providing support and encouragement and building slowly to success.

These principles can be applied as three guiding questions when beginning to implement a learning strategy:

1. Does my client recognize that at least part of the solution to the employment difficulty may be in *learning* something?

2. Does my client perceive him/herself as capable of learning?

3. Will my client's environment be supportive and reinforcing of client learning?

As was the case in the decision-making strategy, these questions are not asked directly to clients. Rather, they serve as mental guides to counsellors by which counsellors can judge the probable success of client learning and the degree of support they will have to provide throughout learning.

Types of Learning

What specific types of learning can employment counsellors be expected to facilitate? In the chapter on Implement Strategy, we discussed the ways in which counsellors can assist clients to access and use information. This is a significant area in which to facilitate learning. Assisting clients to make important employment related decisions and to learn to apply what has been learned to other decisions is another important learning area. In addition and the focus of this chapter, counsellors can impact upon the following three general categories of learning:

1 - Skills. Skills are a learned power of doing something competently. In our context, we are not referring to job-specific skills, but to those general skills related to finding and holding a job. These may include interpersonal skills necessary to get along with others in a work setting; interview skills necessary to get a job; decision-making skills; information seeking and processing skills.

2 - Habits. Habits are acquired ways of behaving which have become nearly involuntary. For example, Canadians are known internationally as the users of 'eh' which gets tacked on to the ends of any type of sentence and has no meaning whatever. This has become a Canadian 'habit' and many, if not most of us, are quite unaware of the frequency with which we use it. At the same time, it is a relatively innocuous habit which may irritate but is unlikely to interfere with our ability to function well on our jobs. Other habits do interfere - avoiding responsibility, procrastinating, complaining, persisting in self-defeating thoughts, inability to accept criticism, disorganization. Many clients have failed to make positive, job-relevant behaviours habitual and have allowed other less effective or negative habits to develop. In order to achieve the employment futures they wish, habits must be altered.

3 - Motivation. Motivation is the willingness to forego immediate rewards or to put up with some present hardship to accomplish some greater reward in the future. Some individuals have learned to be highly motivated and others have had life experiences that have taught them to be less motivated. In the

previous chapter on Reluctant Clients, we discussed many aspects of motivation which are applicable here. Certainly altering an individual's level of motivation is no easy task and we are not suggesting that counsellors can be expected to dramatically reverse negative learning which has taken a lifetime to acquire. There are, however, some things counsellors can know and apply which can create the conditions under which a client may find it easier to behave in motivated ways.

In each of the preceding areas of learning the challenge to counsellors is contained in the following questions:

- What will my client have to learn to get and keep a job?
- What is the minimally acceptable level of learning to be accomplished in order for my client to get and keep a job?
- What learning plan and learning experiences can we structure to facilitate my client's learning?

Learning, re-learning and unlearning are not usually quick processes and it is not always feasible or possible for counsellors to be available and involved from beginning to end. Counsellors can however assist clients to identify targets, develop a learning plan to acquire needed skills, habits and motivation, teach the plan to the client, assist the client in initiating the first steps in the plan and give the client encouragement, support and positive acknowledgement of accomplishments. Helping a client develop a learning plan to achieve an employment target is itself a significant accomplishment. Problems often seem persistent only because no planned attack on them has been made. Even difficult problems yield to a planned and sustained effort.

Before looking at the specific steps of learning strategies, let us briefly resituate ourselves within the Systematic Employment Counselling model.

Review of Implement Strategy

You will recall from Chapter 5 that the steps of Implement Strategy are visualized as follows:

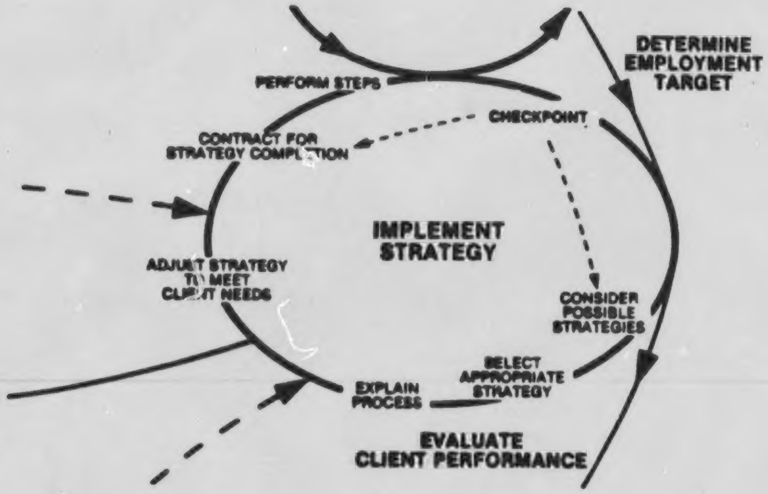

DETERMINE EMPLOYMENT TARGET
PERFORM STEPS
CHECKPOINT
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Figure 5. Sequence of steps in Implement Strategy

In the previous chapter on Decision-Making, recall that the counsellor ensured that the target Nancy wanted to achieve required decision-making. This made the step of 'Consider Possible Strategies' very simple. The counsellor's decision was very quickly to implement a decision-making strategy. The strategy was selected with Nancy; adjusted to meet her individual concerns in terms of time available to work on the decision; Nancy agreed through a written contract to work on the decision; and the counsellor and Nancy began to work through the eight steps of the decision-making strategy.

This same sequence of steps applies to the implementation of any systematic strategy. Perform steps will of course alter according to the type of strategy to be implemented. In addition, you will note that your repertoire of strategies to consider is increasing. Strategies covered so far include Information, Sequenced Learning and Decision-Making. By the end of this chapter, we will have added Skill Acquisition, Habit Acquisition and Motivation. You will readily see the importance of target clarity in order to consider and select the strategy most suited to the type of learning identified in the target.

As stated elsewhere in the text, the type of learning to be acquired should be evident from the preceding work done in the assessment component of employment counselling.

Consider for example the following contingency statements and what type of learning (information, decision-making, skill, habit, motivation) they imply:

1. If I am to get a job, I must learn to present myself better at interviews.
2. If I am to return to work, I must arrange support services for my children.
3. If I am to avoid being fired, I have to be more responsible and punctual.
4. If I am going to find out what I want to do, I have to be prepared to study, read and make some decisions.
5. If I am going to avoid arguments with my boss, I have to learn a different method for handling criticism.
6. If I am going to achieve the promotions I want, I have to become more organized at work.
7. If I am to overcome my nervousness in interviews, I must practice my interview behaviours here and at home.
8. If I am to be considered by X company, I have to decide about re-training.
9. If I am to keep a job, I must learn how to control my temper.
10. If I am to decide on a career, I must learn more about what I can do and what I want to do.
11. If I am to get out of my present job situation, I have to plan how and decide when.

Once one begins to approach presenting issues as learning issues, the type of learning to be acquired becomes clear. In the above examples, we can begin to define (in order) learning deficits in the areas of 1) Skill; 2) Information; 3) Habit; 4) Information and decision-making; 5) Habit; 6) Habit; 7) Skill; 8) Decision-Making; 9) Habit; 10) Information and Decision-Making; 11) Decision-Making. The one area in which it is unlikely that the contingency statement and goal will indicate the type of learning to be acquired is the area of motivation. Clients are unlikely to state "If I am to get a job, then I must become more interested and persistent." Motivation levels are subtle and it is much more likely that motivation will be an additional factor to be addressed in the course of learning a new skill or habit, making a decision or using information. It must also be noted that clients may need assistance in overcoming learning deficits in more than one area. An information need is often accompanied by a skill or habit need; a motivation need often accompanies all types of learning. We will address these combinations in more detail later in this text. For now, there are two important considerations:

1. The type of strategy to be selected depends upon the nature of the learning to be acquired. Once the employment counselling target has been established, the counsellor will be able to identify the type of learning as:

    - Information
    - Decision-Making
    - Skill Acquisition

- Habit Acquisition
- Motivation change ... or a combination thereof

The steps of the strategy to be chosen follow directly from the nature of the learning to be undertaken.

2. There can be a snowballing effect in learning; that is, if a client learns to handle one area more competently (ie. acquires and processes information), his/her confidence (habit and motivation) may be sufficiently improved so that it no longer needs attention in terms of employment. For example, if a client improves his/her ability to handle job interviews (skills), motivation to find work may increase.

   It is therefore wise to consider beginning with the learning deficit which is easier to handle and has the greatest chance of client success in the shortest time period. There is no foolproof recipe for this decision but in general, one can consider learning needs on a scale of easier to more difficult as being Information; Skill; Decision-Making; Habit; Motivation. Where one must choose with the client (i.e. more than one learning need exists), choose easier first.

One final but important point for review is necessary. In planning learning strategies, it is extremely important that the stated target be achievable by the client and move the client as quickly as possible towards realistic employment. The "as quickly as possible" demands that the target aim at a level which would be acceptable for the employment setting the client can realistically aspire towards. To illustrate, a client who has limited social skills and seeks assembly line work may need to learn enough social skills to succeed in an interview and no more. A client who is persistently late and disorganized may need to learn specific techniques to get to work on time but need not learn outstanding work habits. While this is important in all employment targets, it is crucial in learning targets and easy to overlook. Habits, work-related skills and motivation exist at many levels of competency. Because those of you reading this text are successfully employed, you will have already mastered, at a high level of competency, the employment skills, habits and motivation necessary to maintain and progress on your job. As a result, it is sometimes easy to assume that the level of competence needed by your client is the same or similar and thus to aim too high. This results in frustration for both client and counsellor.

Knowing where your client is now in terms of the learning to be acquired is therefore crucial as is knowing the level he/she needs to acquire for his/her specific employment setting.

In skill and habit areas involving interpersonal situations, it is frequently difficult to get an accurate grasp of where the client is now. The technique of ROLE PLAYING can be very useful.

Clients can sometimes demonstrate their manner of responding better than they can describe it. Use of this technique can help you avoid aiming too high. Let's look at a skill example:

Counsellor:	We're making progress Jane. You indicate you are ready to work on learning how to present yourself better in interviews and I'm certainly ready to work on this with you. We're going to need first to be more specific. I'll need to know how you present yourself now and we can then determine together what we need to practice and learn. Can you recall your last job interview and what happened?
Jane:	I don't know. I just freeze and get tongue-tied and I seem to say stupid things. I don't know - it's hard to describe.
Counsellor:	How would it be if we act it out. I'll play a potential employer and I'll interview you. It may seem a bit unnatural at first but try to treat it as a regular interview. I can then see better what happens to you during an interview and we can decide together what specifically we want to work on ... etc.

A habit example:

Counsellor: We're now ready to develop together a plan of action to help you learn to handle criticism at work. It's very important that we understand clearly how you handle criticism now, what happens when your work is criticized, what you say and do. Then together we can look at very specific behaviour you want to learn to change. We want to make sure our plan of action really fits your situation.

Client: How do we do that?

Counsellor: First, let's attempt to look at the typical situation when your supervisor makes critical remarks about your work. I'll be the supervisor and assume that you haven't been careful enough in your work. You respond as you usually would OK? etc.

A role play in which you and client act out the problem situation gives you a relevant sample of the client's behaviour that may reveal things that your client has been unable or unwilling to reveal. In a verbal description of a problem, the client's defenses are apt to cause him/her to depict the situation in the most favourable light. In role playing, especially if you and your client play your parts well, the client will be caught up in the drama and be more likely to reveal typical and undisguised responses. Perhaps it can be seen how your client's behaviour is creating the problem, contributing to it, or working against its solution. Even if the role playing does not directly reveal the relevant aspects of the problem, it can serve as a stimulus to help the client recall the vital elements.

Following a role play, you may be in a much better position to know the client's present level of learning and with this base, determine together a realistic level of learning to move the client towards employment as quickly as possible.

We are now ready to move to Performing the Strategy Steps of Skill, Habit and Motivation acquisition.

EXERCISE I

1. Which of the following indicate inadequate learning?

   A. George views life as having little promise.
   B. Your client does not know how to schedule his time.
   C. A client is seldom on time for appointments.
   D. Mr. Harrison puts things off until the last minute.
   E. Mary Johnson has a negative self-concept.
   F. A client cannot express himself well in an interview.

EXERCISE I (continued)

G. Frank Williams is unemployed, agreeable in counselling, but makes no effort to get a job.

H. A client thinks of herself as incompetent and worthless.

I. Your client does not persist at difficult work assignments.

J. A client doesn't know how to obtain job leads.

2. For each one of the following, indicate whether what has to be learned is information, a skill, a habit, or increased motivation:

A. Your client is disorganized, is late for appointments, and forgets things he has been asked to do.

B. This client does not follow through on suggestions for getting a job.

C. Your client puts things off until the last minute and then does a hurried and inadequate job.

D. This client has no idea of how to learn about employment opportunities.

EXERCISE I (continued)

E. Your client has unrealistic salary and job expectations.

3. In one sentence, indicate what a client might have to do to be more employable in each of the above.

4. For the following case, how would you assess your client's skill level?

Your client is not sure how he would perform in a job interview. He has had a few interviews but does not know how well he did.

Performing the Strategy Steps

Learning Skills Related to Obtaining and Holding a Job

Employment counsellors must sometimes help clients develop skills necessary to find and hold a job. These are not specific job skills but general skills related to work and getting along well on a job. A skill is more than knowledge. It may require knowing something, but a skill is an ability to do something. There are many general skills required to obtain and hold a job; for example, regularly being on time for work, getting along with supervisors and fellow employees, organizing time and tasks, finding and following up on job leads, and presenting oneself well in a job interview.

In the normal nonsystematic way in which people learn to deal with life situations, many individuals fail to learn appropriate ways to deal with certain job-related situations. Some cannot express themselves adequately to those in authority. Still others lack skills in ordering time and tasks and are consistently being late and leaving things undone. And many others lack any number of responses required to obtain and maintain a job.

Frequently these learning deficits can be attributed to the absence of adequate examples to follow or the failure to attend to examples or models that were available. Parents with limited skills often pass these inadequacies on to their children by serving as poor models to follow.

Inadequate models are but one of several causes for learning deficits. Failure to learn appropriate responses may be due to insufficient encouragement during early attempts to learn or to some embarrassment, punishment, hurt, or failure that discouraged learning. Thus, for a variety of reasons, important employability skills that should have been learned are not well learned or are absent entirely in some clients.

The counsellor question then becomes:

"What can I do to help my client develop the minimum level skills required to obtain and hold a job?

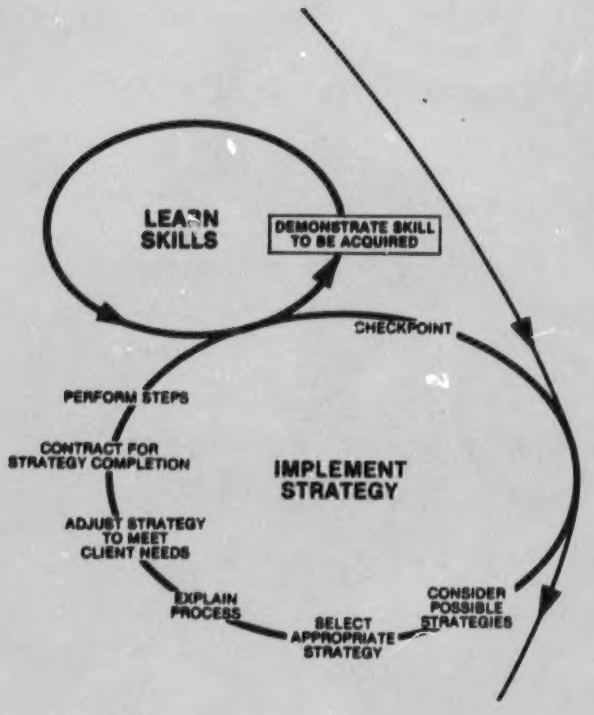
Whenever we are dealing with a learning skill deficit, the client can best be helped by an action plan that:

1. Provides for a demonstration or example of the skill.
2. Allows the client to try out the skill.
3. Provides for feedback on the client's tryout.
4. Gives the client opportunities to practice.
5. Provides for skill assessment.

Let us take a look at each of the above in detail.

Leave space for graphic

1. Demonstrate the Skill. Clients must have a clear idea of what the skill is that they are trying to acquire and how it relates to their finding or keeping a job. Many interpersonal skills like interviewing for a job, asking for a change in a work assignment, and getting along with fellow employees can be demonstrated by you in the counselling session. Learning by watching a demonstration has been called learning through modeling. All of us have learned by watching and by imitating a model. Picture the following series of events. A young girl is asked what she wants to be when she grows older. Her reply: "A lawyer, just like my mom." Think of a child who points to a toy gun, goes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EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

"bang, bang" and says "You're dead" after watching a detective story on television. Think of people going to stores to buy clothes that reflect the "outdoor" or "leisure" look which has been described and featured in the latest fashion magazines. All of these events are examples of modeling.

Clients will be more able to develop a skill if they have seen the skill demonstrated or modeled. Being shown how to do it is usually more effective than being told how it should be done. Imagine trying to teach a child how to tie his/her shoe by telling him/her how it should be done without showing him/her. Teachers and coaches have long used demonstration as aids in instruction. More recently, counsellors have recognized the importance of having clients observe several ways to deal with a situation, try them out, and practice the most suitable for them. The counsellor can demonstrate or model the skill to be learned. Clients can also be asked to observe other skillful individuals in real-life situations.

Modeling can communicate to the learner a view of the complete skill to be learned, the parts that make up the skill, and the results of a skilled performance. A demonstration shows the learner the skill to be acquired more accurately and vividly than words can convey. Modeling is a useful technique for counsellors who often need to help individuals learn new ways to deal with job seeking or on-the-job situations. Clients can acquire entirely new skills or new patterns of existing skills. The client may know and be able to perform all of the required parts of the skill but be unable to put the parts together.

Modeling can help the client relate all the parts into a complex new pattern of skills. For example, the client may have all the skills necessary to develop job leads but has not learned to put these together into a systematic job search. Modeling is useful in learning single skills as well as in learning complex patterns of skills.

There are four major sources of models for clients:

(a) The Client as a Model. In discussing a problem with a client, you may discover that he/she can remember at least one occasion in which he/she performed well in the problem situation. A clear description by the client of the situation and how he/she successfully reacted can serve as a model for future behaviour. Perhaps a skill now used in one area of life can be applied to a job-related area in which there is a problem. Identifying effective responses that a client has used before, you can suggest these as models to follow in current problem areas.

(b) The Counsellor as a Model. Counsellors can, in role play, demonstrate several ways to handle a situation from which a client can model and learn. Employment counsellors, in their counselling practice, have seen hundreds of clients whose employment related skills are inadequate and have had the unspoken reaction "If only he/she wouldn't do that; if only he/she could correct this" etc. This assumes the counsellor knows how it could be improved - and indeed he/she does! One of the reasons counsellors are often reluctant to use themselves as models is that they assume they must do it perfectly in order for a client to learn. Not so. Remember, we are dealing with assisting clients to learn skills at a minimum level acceptable for employment. Counsellors have learned well beyond that level. The important learning aspect is that clients have an opportunity to observe and model at skill levels higher than the ones they now possess. Not only is it not necessary that the model be perfect; it is likely preferable.

(c) Other Live Models. Some skills are difficult to demonstrate in the office. Your client might be able to recall someone he/she knows who possesses the desired skill. If he/she has observed the model well and can vividly recall enough of the relevant details, the recollection and description of the skill may serve as an appropriate model. If the observation has not been adequate or if memory is vague, it may be necessary to ask your client to observe again and note how the skill is performed.

(d) Symbolic Modeling. Symbolic models are presented through words or media rather than through observation of live performers. A model can be presented using movie film, videotape, audiotape, filmstrips, pictures, cartoons, and verbal descriptions.

When observing models (live or symbolic), counsellors should instruct and assist clients to look for the following:

1. What was the situation in which the skill was used?
    a. What was the situation?
    b. What people were there?
    c. What were the circumstances?

2. What did the model do?
    a. What was said?
    b. What was the manner of speech?
    c. What did the model do?

3. What were the consequences?
    a. How did others react?
    b. How did the model feel about the experience?

The client answers and observations to the above questions become the base for client learning. The intent is of course that the client begins to identify what the model did that he/she either does not do, or does not know how to do. The client is then in a position to recognize what he/she needs to learn and begin to model accordingly. Following skill demonstration, the client must be provided with an opportunity to try out what he/she has just seen modelled.

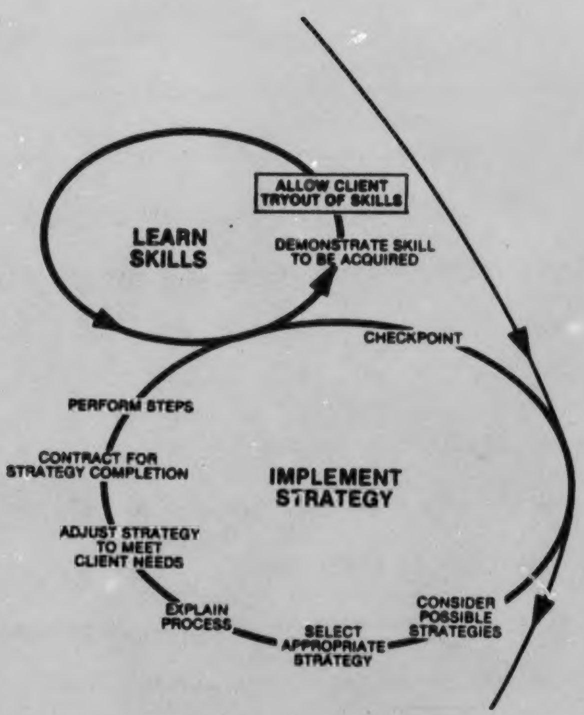
INSERT GRAPHIC →

2. Allow Client Try-out. For this kind of learning to be effective, it is necessary for clients to attempt to match and rehearse the skill as soon as they have seen it demonstrated. When the counsellor is the model, this is easy to structure. Immediate rehearsals with the counsellor are particularly beneficial as the counsellor has complete control of the environment and can ensure that the client feels safe and free from any possibility of ridicule. The skill can be repeated, one step at a time, until some facility is acquired.

When using models outside of the immediate counselling situation, other sources of client try-out must be sought. Counsellors need to instruct clients to practice as soon as possible after having identified what they need to learn and having seen it done well. A spouse, friend, mirror or tape recorder can work well. When it is difficult or impossible to actually practice immediately after observing the model, some value has been found in having a client rehearse the skill mentally by going through the situation in his/her imagination and as soon as possible to find a mirror, friend etc. to practice verbally.

INSERT GRAPHIC →

3. Provide Feedback. Feedback is essential in the learning process. Clients need to know how well they have matched the model. Counsellors are the best and certainly the safest source of feedback as they will give it in a sensitive and encouraging manner. Other ways of providing feedback are identical with sources of try-out - a mirror, tape recorder, a friend to provide comments. The purpose of feedback is to permit the client to engage in self-correction until the skill is learned.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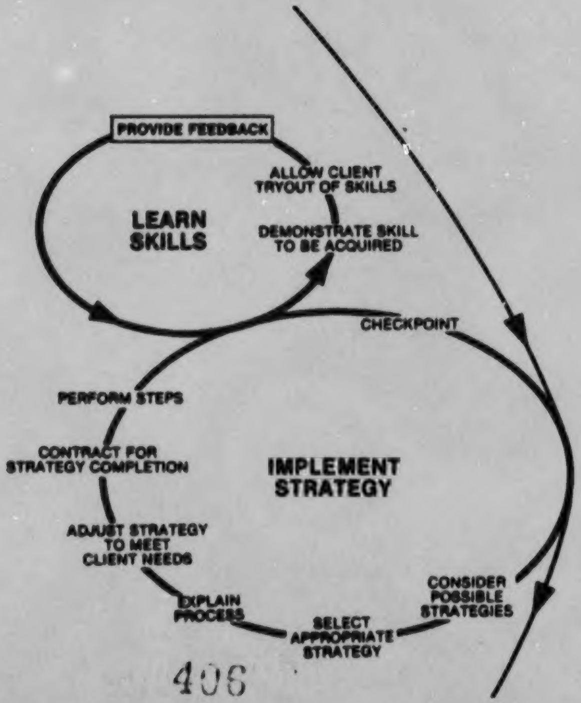
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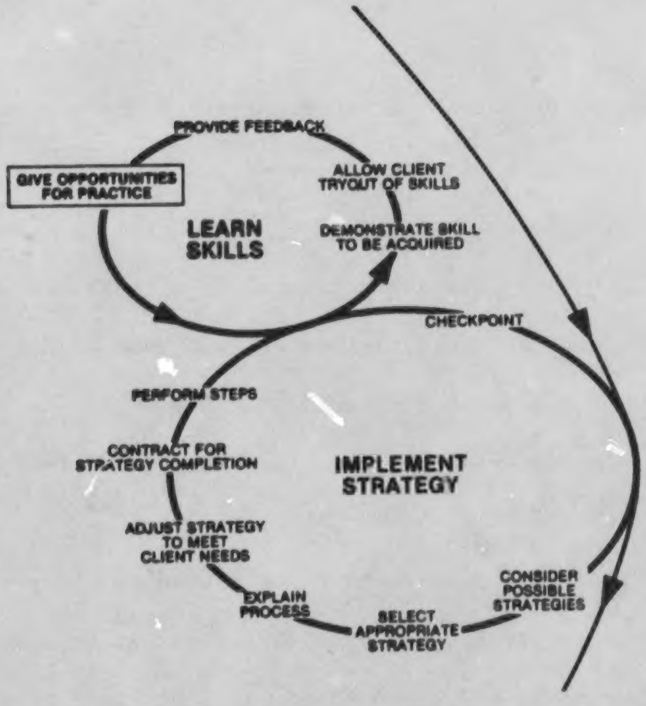
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

INSERT GRAPHIC →

4. Encourage Practice. After the initial try-out and feedback, considerable practice is usually required to develop the skill. That which is accomplished in counselling is only a beginning. The best that can be expected is that your client will have a relatively clear idea of what the skill is and the ability to perform at least an approximation of it. Your client will have to practice on his/her own. A plan of continued practice should be developed with your client, perhaps a plan in which practice is sequenced in increasing difficulty.

INSERT GRAPHIC →

5. Encouraging Self-Assessment. Included in the plan for continued practice should be opportunities for your client to assess his/her own progress and to get feedback after he/she no longer sees his/her counsellor. Before ending our contact with a client, we may want to spend at least a few minutes in identifying individuals within this person's environment who might be good sources for feedback. For example, we might say "You're going to have to try a number of different ways of eliminating distractions at work. Some may be effective, but also cause people to be offended. Who would be a valued source of information as to how you're doing and whether or not it is bothering others?"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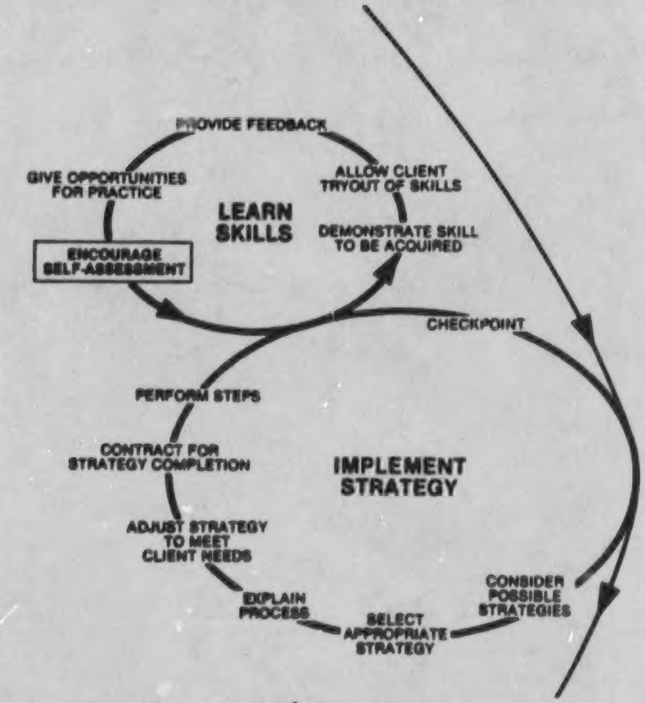
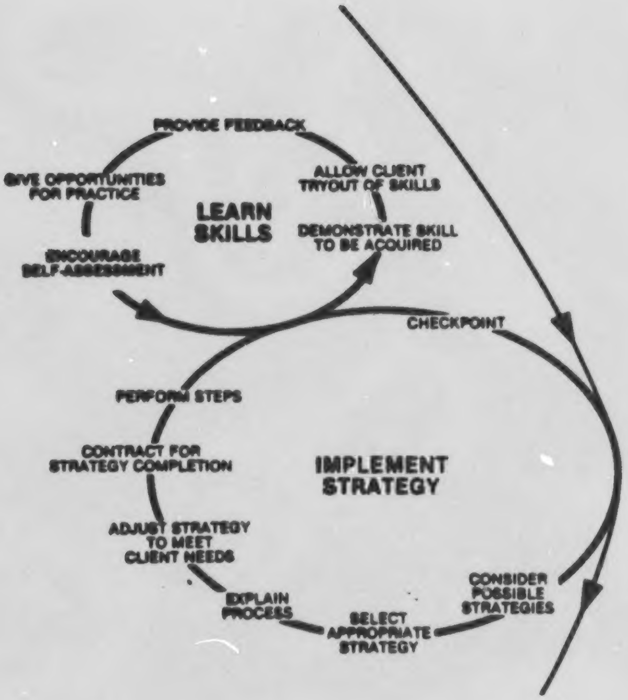
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES


PROVIDE FEEDBACK
GIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE
ALLOW CLIENT TRYOUT OF SKILLS
LEARN SKILLS
DEMONSTRATE SKILL TO BE ACQUIRED
ENCOURAGE SELF-ASSESSMENT
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

The strategy steps for assisting clients to require increased skills can be visualized as follows:


PROVIDE FEEDBACK
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EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Figure 6. Sequence of Steps Required to Learn Skills

EXERCISE II

1. How would you assess a client's skill in presenting his/her positive qualities to a prospective employer?

EXERCISE II (continued)

2. In a role-played job interview, the counsellor asked the client about his work experience. The client replied that he had no previous experience, only part-time work. How could modeling be used to demonstrate a more positive but accurate reply to that question?

3. This client put off doing unpleasant tasks. He did not organize his time to get the job done. In discussing the client's ability to organize, the counsellor learned that his client planned in some detail a fishing trip that he and some friends had taken. How might the counsellor use the client as a self-model to help the client learn to organize unpleasant but necessary tasks?

4. You want your client to observe how a friend of his handles certain interpersonal encounters. What kind of things in the situation should the client observe?

EXERCISE II (continued)

5. List the six steps in helping a client develop a skill.

Summary

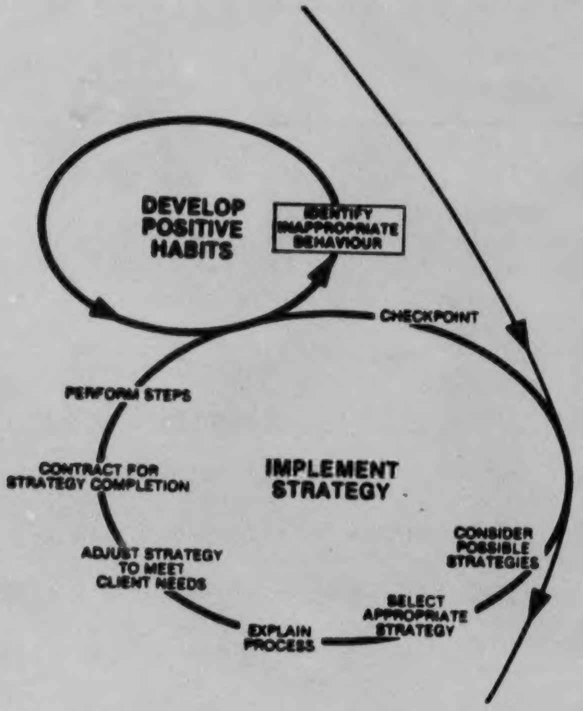
Lack of interpersonal skills or skills related to finding and keeping a job prevent some clients from productive employment. As an employment counsellor, you must be able to assess skill deficits and help clients acquire minimum competency in these skill areas. The general strategy for helping clients acquire skills is to arrange for them to see the skill demonstrated, have them try out the new skill, give them feedback, and finally arrange for them to practice and assess their performance. Remember, in this chapter we are dealing with techniques to be addressed in setting up a skill acquisition action plan. Action plans will change according to the learning deficit your client is demonstrating. The process followed to arrive at the action plan and translate it into a contract for behaviour change remains constant as outlined in the steps of Implement Strategy (see Figure 5).

Eliminating Inappropriate Habits and Acquiring Positive Ones

Many clients have difficulty obtaining and keeping jobs because they have not developed habits that are employment assets. They have not acquired habit patterns that bring order, responsibility, persistent effort, and initiative to their lives. Instead they have developed the negative responses of avoiding responsibility, procrastinating, complaining, giving up on difficult tasks, and persisting in negative, self-defeating thoughts. The problem is not that they don't know better or that they lack the required skills. The difficulty is that they have failed to make the positive, job-relevant behaviours habitual and have allowed other less effective or negative habits to develop. This is well illustrated in the statement of one client who frequently found himself in jail. He told his counsellor, "I know what to do (to stay out of jail). I just need help in getting me to do it".

Long-established habits are difficult to break. Even bad habits have utility, at least in the short run. Procrastination relieves one of the bother of doing something now. Saying, "I'll do it tomorrow," makes today more pleasant. Avoiding responsibility also avoids the difficulties that are part of responsibility--hard work, chance of failure, and possible blame if one doesn't do well. It is easier to let someone else take charge.

Changing a habit is a long-term project. As an employment counsellor, you do not have the time or opportunity to take full responsibility for such a project.


DEVELOP POSITIVE HABITS
IDENTIFY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS

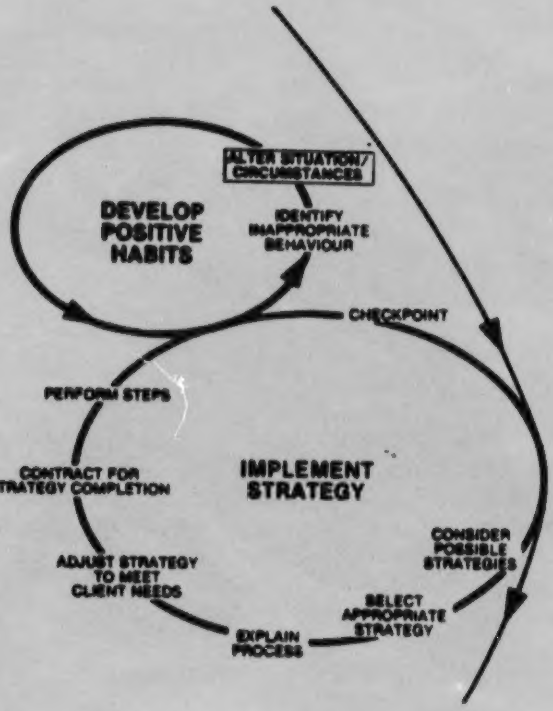
would you do? That's correct! It would be necessary to recycle within the Systematic Employment Counselling system.

Assuming, however, that the first step has been accurately carried out, the next step may then be introduced to eliminate the inappropriate habit. As we shall see, for some habits, this second step may be all that will be required to help a client develop a positive habit. That is, once the inappropriate habits have been eliminated the positive habits will take care of themselves. This becomes clearer as we discuss the second step.

INSERT GRAPHIC →

Altering the situation or circumstances in which the inappropriate habit occurs. Occasionally the effects of a bad habit can be minimized by attending to the situation or circumstances in which the habit is a problem, instead of attacking the habit directly. The choice of a job is itself a way to minimize the effects of a bad habit. Clients who have not developed good grooming habits will be more disadvantaged in some jobs than others. Inconsiderateness and rudeness could not be tolerated in a job dealing with the public, but might be less critical in jobs performed on an assembly line. The question to be asked is, "Can your client be placed in a job setting that will minimize the negative consequences of his/her bad habits and allow him/her to maintain employment?" If so, this is the most effective and time-efficient route to choose.

A relatively minor alteration in a situation can have beneficial effects. One counsellor helped her client see that the arguments he and his work supervisor had were always in front of other workers. Neither the client nor the supervisor wanted to back down or make concessions in front of the "audience".


ALTER SITUATION/
CIRCUMSTANCES
DEVELOP POSITIVE HABITS
IDENTIFY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
EXPLAIN PROCESS

The counsellor suggested that when her client disagreed with his supervisor, he find an opportunity when they could be alone to discuss the grievance. The supervisor was much more reasonable in a one-to-one discussion when he didn't have to worry about losing face in front of his other workers. This process could be introduced by a counsellor saying, "Let's think of a specific situation in which a confrontation might take place and then think of a response that would remove you and the supervisor from the other workers in order to discuss your differences. How might you begin?"

Clearly, in both of the above examples, the potential for solving the client's habit deficit rested simply in altering the situation or circumstances in which the inappropriate habit occured. In the first example, the problem could be solved by placing the client in a job setting that minimizes his/her inappropriate habits and enables him/her to maintain employment. In the second example, a change in the situation for the discussion took much of the heat out of the problem and did not add to the client's growing reputation as an habitual trouble maker.

In both examples the counsellor, having through CHECKPOINT realized that he/she need go no further with DEVELOP POSITIVE HABITS, would then proceed to EVALUATING PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES (if no other strategy is required) or return to IMPLEMENT STRATEGY.

Sometimes, however, altering the situation or circumstances in which the inappropriate habit occurs is not enough. Take for example, the case of a worker whose job security is treatened by his/her frequent and violent outbursts of anger. Let's say you attempted to alter the situation or circumstances only to find little improvement in the worker's behaviour. More is required. A plan to develop a positive habit must be implemented.

In many instances, developing positive habits is a matter of replacing ineffective or destructive habits with more effective ones. Your client's bad habit serves some purpose for him/her. It reduces anxiety, avoids work, prevents a failure, or in some ways makes him/her more comfortable. To merely eliminate the negative habit, if that were possible, would leave a void which some other bad habit might fill. We are all familiar with giving up smoking and substituting over-eating. Habitual, inappropriate behaviours are often best eliminated by substituting more effective behaviours. In the preceding example, it would not be possible to eliminate the worker's violent responses without his/her learning more effective ways to relieve his/her frustration or express feelings. In such instances, we would then proceed through the remaining five steps in the process of developing a positive habit listed previously and presented visually in Figure 7.

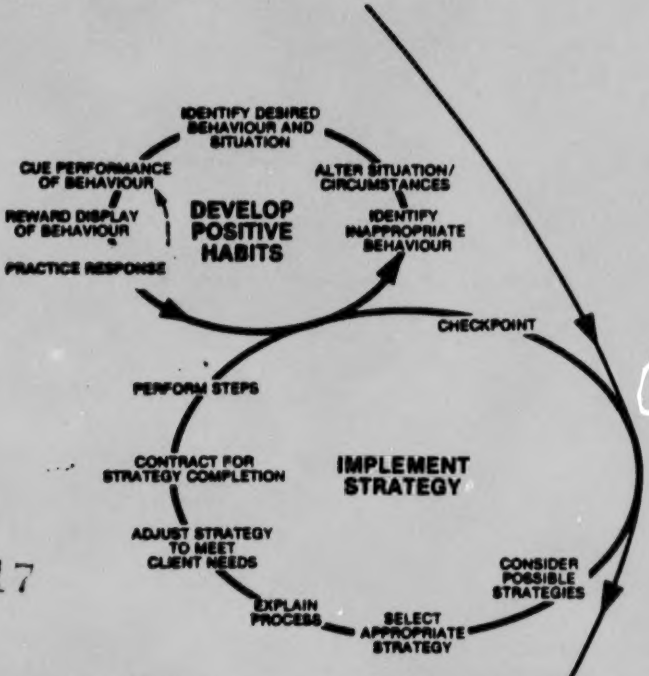

IDENTIFY DESIRED BEHAVIOUR AND SITUATION
ALTER SITUATION/ CIRCUMSTANCES
IDENTIFY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR
DEVELOP POSITIVE HABITS
CUE PERFORMANCE OF BEHAVIOUR
REWARD DISPLAY OF BEHAVIOUR
PRACTICE RESPONSE
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Figure 7 Sequence of steps required to develop positive habits.

These steps are illustrated in the case of a woman whose negative self-depreciative thoughts worked against anything the counsellor suggested to help her. The counsellor finally decided that before any other positive steps could be taken with this client, the habitual negative thoughts and feelings about herself would have to be replaced with more positive ones. Therefore, the immediate counselling target became to help her think more positively about herself. First, the counsellor tried to have his client identify her positive qualities to use as a basis for positive self-thoughts. She was unable to identify any specific good qualities that she possessed. The counsellor asked her if she believed that all people are entitled to respect. She agreed that this was so. She further agreed that all people have some essential goodness about them, and finally agreed that she was a good person worthy of respect even though she could think of nothing specific that was positive in her personality. The counsellor asked her to say, "I'm a good person," aloud several times in the counselling office and encouraged her to say it aloud at home several times a day. To increase the likelihood that she would do this, a cue was sought as a reminder. She typically received and made many phone calls each day, and it was decided that the ringing of the phone or making a phone call was to be a cue reminding her to make the positive self-statement. A card with the statement, "I'm a good person" was placed near the phone. She was to make the positive statement before answering the phone or before placing a call. Until the phone itself acted as a reminder, the card was the cue that signaled the response. It was not long before the phone itself was enough of a cue and the card was no longer needed.

Answering the phone or making a call after making the positive statement was a reward for the desired behaviour, as it was learned earlier that she enjoyed talking to friends on the phone. In a short time other positive self-statements were added and practiced in the same way. Some positive qualities were suggested to her by friends with whom she discussed what she was doing. A good deal of progress was made in reducing her negative thoughts and replacing them with more positive ones. This progress permitted the counsellor to proceed with helping her find employment without negative, self-depreciating thoughts interfering and debilitating her.

When your client needs to acquire a positive habit, your first concern should be that he/she is aware of the behavioural and situational components of the habit and how the habit pattern relates to employment goals. You might say, for example, "We've talked about your need to get started on tasks more quickly. We've also talked about your interest in being promoted. Do you see a connection between these?"

A final example deals with another client who was having difficulty getting a job:

In the initial interview, the counsellor learned that the client knew how to look for work but put off doing the things he knew he should to secure employment. By procrastinating, he put off the unpleasant experience of being turned down. The client regarded being refused a job as a failure. He and his counsellor discussed the fact that putting off the job search did postpone the anxiety, but did not lead to a job. Many leads have to be explored to find a job. Just as a good salesman must talk to many potential customers to make a sale and cannot let one or more refusals to buy discourage him, so too must the job seeker expect to see many potential employers before getting a job. Being refused a particular job is a natural part of the process and not a failure. The goal for the client was to follow up on as many job leads as possible. Success or failure was to be determined by how much job seeking was done and not whether or not a particular employer hired him. The client was helped to feel good about his job-seeking activities, even though they had not yielded a job yet. The counsellor praised his client's efforts and encouraged him to feel some pride in working hard at the difficult task of finding a job. Because persistence in job seeking was not habitual with this client, some prompts were necessary to remind him that he had agreed to take some positive action toward finding work each day. In the counselling office, the counsellor and client listed job-seeking activities for each day of the week. These activities included looking for job ads in the newspaper, telephoning or calling in person in response to appropriate jobs listed, asking friends and acquaintances about job leads, and calling on personnel offices of firms in the area. The list for each day was placed where the client would see it on arising in the morning. The client was to go over the list and plan when each item would be accomplished that day. On retiring in the evening, the client was asked to check off the things done and place activities undone on the next day's list. The client was encouraged to regard with pride and satisfaction the accomplishments he checked off each evening. Completion of a difficult task is worthy of pride.

In a week's time the client brought the lists to the counsellor, who reviewed his progress and further praised and encouraged his efforts. Over a three-week period this client's activities directed at finding a job increased considerably. His disappointment at being refused a particular job did not disappear but did not prevent him from looking again the next day. He found a job after three weeks of active searching.

EXERCISE III

1. What is meant by an inappropriate habit?

2. In identifying a habit, what should be attended to and described?

EXERCISE III (continued)

3. Read the following case description, then outline the steps that you might suggest to help the client. Try to incorporate the principles present in this section in helping the client develop positive habits

One of the major obstacles to this client finding a job is his appearance. His hair is long and uncombed. His nails usually have dirt under them. The clothes he wears are unkempt, and his appearance makes it difficult for an employer to offer him a job. He is obviously unconcerned about his appearance and lacks the habits of cleanliness and neatness.

EXERCISE III (continued)

4. Your client forgets appointments. This habit has caused him to miss sessions with you and to lose out on job interviews. How could you use the steps suggested for helping this client acquire positive habits? Write a brief counselling plan using these steps.

Summary

Lack of positive habits or possession of negative habits are frequently impediments to employment. Habits are learned and can be changed. In some instances, changing habits simply involves identifying those inappropriate habits and altering the situation or circumstances in which they occur. Other inappropriate habits are best changed by replacing them with more effective ones. The latter habits can be developed by strategically placing cues to remind clients that a new response is in order, by rewarding the performance of the new response, and by continued practice.

Helping Clients Increase their Level of Motivation

Nearly all of us know things about ourselves that we would like to change. You, no doubt, can think of skills or knowledge you would like to have, characteristics you would like to exhibit, or habits you would like to discard. Most of us have aspects of our personality that we need to improve and are within our power to change. Then why haven't we taken action? Why do we too easily abandon efforts toward self-improvement and persist in behaviours we know to be disadvantageous? Why is it so difficult to give up undesirable but habitual behaviour? We have discussed the answer earlier. However inefficient or harmful they are in the long run, our current behaviours have utility. They bring us immediate rewards more compelling than benefits promised in the future. Learning new responses is difficult, even painful. It is often more comfortable just doing nothing. We are generally more tolerant of our own inertia than of the indolence of others. Why don't clients do something about their situation? The answer is for the same reasons that we don't do all we can to improve our lives. The difference among people in motivation is one of degree. Some individuals have learned to be highly motivated, and others have had life experiences that have taught them to be less motivated.

Motivation is the willingness to forego immediate rewards or to put up with present hardship to accomplish some greater reward in the future. Those who have a history of working toward and achieving something of personal value learn to work for delayed rewards and are said to be motivated. For some individuals, however, delayed rewards have not been achieved or promised future compensation has not been delivered. Working toward distant rewards has ceased to be a meaningful activity. These individuals are identified as lacking motivation. For one reason or another, they have not often experienced hard work and persistent effort resulting in a valued reward. They, therefore, learn to respond to immediate rewards. Only with great difficulty can a counsellor help unmotivated clients set aside their immediate, relative comfort and tackle difficult tasks with the promise of future compensation.

Knowing more productive behaviours and having opportunities to practice them does not guarantee that they will be acquired. Learning new responses can be slow and difficult, and the rewards of the new response may be long delayed. One of the most difficult tasks in counselling is helping clients to remain steadfast in pursuit of their goals. A counsellor needs to use words of encouragement, such as, "You were so elated when you finished the application process a week ahead of schedule--and so was I. Now you have another tough hurdle to undertake and you have to keep working at it if you are to have the job you want." Such words help but cannot be expected to be sufficient. You will recall our discussion of motivation in Chapter 3 - "Reluctant Clients" and how it is often very difficult for clients who have experienced much failure to remain motivated. Such individuals may indeed avoid goal-setting and task accomplishment in order to avoid failure. More than encouraging words will be needed to break this cycle.

A great deal has been written about learned helplessness that is relevant to lack of motivation. There are those who have experienced failure and defeat so often in life, in spite of their best efforts, that they have come to see little, if any, connection between effort and reward. It is not that they don't want better lives but that they feel powerless in attaining an improved lot in life. They say to themselves, "No matter what I do, I fail, so why try?" This feeling that nothing can be done to improve things is called learned helplessness. Once in this state, individuals will be unmotivated until they have had numerous experiences in which their efforts have had a positive payoff. Unfortunately, their initial attempts are not likely to be successful, and they generally give up before their efforts become effective enough to bring rewards. A most difficult problem.

Identifying Unmotivated Clients

Clients show their lack of motivation in a variety of ways. Again, recalling Chapter 3, the easier ones to identify are those who refuse to admit to having a problem, who blame everyone else or "the system" for their troubles, who are silent, who avoid discussing what is going on currently in their lives and talk about the past, or who are hostile. The powerless response, "I couldn't do that," to the counsellor's suggestion is a clear indication of a defeated, unmotivated client.

More difficult to detect as unmotivated are those who talk a great deal, seem to be co-operating, but in fact are putting up a barrage of words and ideas that the counsellor eventually learns to recognize as defenses against having to face problems. Much the same are clients who verbally agree to every suggestion the counsellor makes but do nothing concrete to implement the suggestions.

Frequently the client's self-defeating attitude and lack of motivation will be apparent in the counselling interview. On other occasions counsellors will identify clients' low levels of motivation by their repeated failure to complete tasks assigned.

Increasing Client Motivation

The following steps are recommended in raising your client's level of motivation:

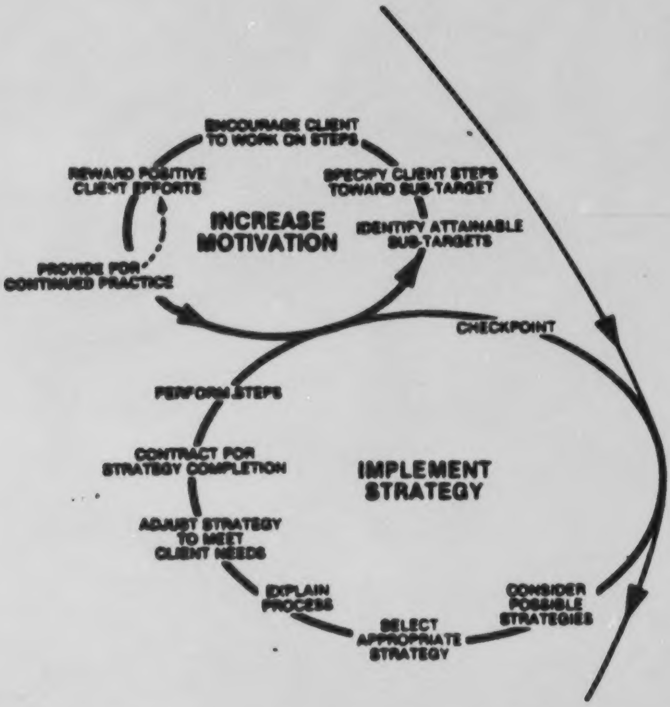

ENCOURAGE CLIENT TO WORK ON STEPS
REWARD POSITIVE CLIENT EFFORTS
SPECIFY CLIENT STEPS TOWARD SUB-TARGET
INCREASE MOTIVATION
IDENTIFY ATTAINABLE SUB-TARGETS
PROVIDE FOR CONTINUED PRACTICE
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

Figure 8 Sequence of Steps Required to Increase Client Motivation

1. Identifying and Specifying Sub-Targets and Client Steps. In Chapter 2 much emphasis was placed on specifying employment goals into smaller, achievable employment targets. This will not be repeated here except to stress that many individuals give their lives direction and purpose by setting goals for themselves. The unmotivated clients are much less influenced by goals, especially distant ones. Targets will have to be much more immediate for these clients than for others. The first few employment targets set will have to be ones than can be very easily accomplished in order to begin to build a success pattern. This is not difficult to do - it merely involves slicing the pie into thinner pieces. One interview skill instead of three; one action to take rather than several; one telephone call; one punctual interview; one in- between session assignment and counsellor-client interviews at shorter intervals may work very effectively. The objective is to begin, however small, to structure a success experience for the client which can be encouraged, praised and used as a building block for more difficult tasks. In order for targets to have any motivating power, clients must begin to associate them with their successes rather than their failures.

EXERCISE IV

Mary Wilson seemed unmotivated to find employment. She claimed that she wanted a job, but found fault with every possibility suggested by her counsellor. She had a

EXERCISE IV (continued)

number of reasons why she couldn't follow up on leads given her by the counsellor. The standard of living she maintained on government welfare payment was significantly less than she would have by working. She had marketable skills although she had not worked for six years. Her two children were now in school full-time and she was free to work. The original employment target established with Mary was:

> To independently contact three potential employers and attempt to arrange job interviews and to attend two interviews arranged by the counsellor, in the textile field, within the next three weeks.

The first step agreed upon was that Mary would attend a CJST session in order to prepare an effective resumé. She cancelled this session. She said she had decided she didn't need the session and indicated she was now working out her budget. Earlier she had indicated that budgetary issues were not a problem for her. She had not contacted any employer.

EXERCISE IV (continued)

Begin a motivation strategy with Mary by writing below the sub-targets you might try to establish with her which could be expected to succeed. In listing the sub-target, recall sequenced learning and attempt to priorize your sub-targets in terms of difficulty level.

2. *Encouraging Clients to Work on Steps*. Often a very *directive approach* is necessary to start an unmotived client working on target-directed steps. You may have to *tell* your client to accomplish a task, rather than just suggesting it. Encouraging, coaxing, even demanding can be necessary to get an unmotivated client to take the first step. You may need to say, "We've gone as far as we can with verbal planning. Now is the time for your digging into some of these thoughts and making them happen. The first steps will be relatively easy, but I'll expect them to be completed before our next meeting, or our work together will not be productive."

It is important to note that to be directive with a client does not mean that you become angry, authoritarian and deliver lectures. It does mean that you outline the task to be accomplished, indicate your expectation that it can and will be accomplished and further indicate that not accomplishing the task will serve to delay the reaching of the client's goal. This does not imply that the relationship dimensions of warmth, trust and immediacy are undesirable. It does acknowledge that unmotivated clients are frequently non-self-directing. They may be passive, appear indifferent and highly dependent on persons with authority. As a result, they may be unwilling or unable to respond within the traditional relationship dimensions and require, for a period of time, a more directive counsellor approach.

Given that the initial step is small and well within your client's ability to perform, it should be clear to your client that you expect performance and will require an accounting at the next interview. If the assignment is not done, no excuses are accepted, because you do not want to teach your client that an excuse serves the same purpose as completing the task. You don't blame or scold, but simply note the non-performance and reassign the task.

The first goal or target-directed steps taken by your client may be to please you or to avoid disappointing or upsetting you. This is acceptable. While eventually clients must be motivated by their own goals, anything that gets the process started is welcomed.

EXERCISE V

Using your first two sub-targets which you listed in response to Exercise IV, write a directive statement for each which you might use with Mary. Ensure that your statement - outlines the task

- indicates your expectation
- indicates the consequences of not accomplishing the task
- is not angry or blameful.

a) ______________________________

____

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____

____

b) ______________________________

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____

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3. Rewarding Goal or Target-Directed Efforts. Effective behaviour brings its own rewards, but while behaviours are being learned, rewards will have to be managed as they are not likely to occur naturally. Unmotivated individuals are under-rewarded individuals. They have given up because they cannot sustain long-unrewarded effort. You must attempt to reward or to see that reward is given for each target-directed step taken by your client. What rewards can the counsellor use? Praise from a respected person is rewarding. To the extent that your client sees you as a caring person working in his/her interest, praise from you will be rewarding and have motivating value.

Simply attending to your client can be rewarding and can be used to promote positive thinking and planning in the counselling interview. After listening to your client's complaints until you understand them, you can get your client on a more positive track by paying less attention to complaints and more to any positive suggestions to remedy the situation. As counsellors we are expected to listen. We don't like to ignore what clients are saying, but with unmotivated, self-defeated, self-depreciative and complaining clients, there comes a time when we have heard enough. We have heard enough about what's wrong in the client's life and what's wrong with society and social institutions, and must focus on the positive steps that can be taken to change things. This is done by ignoring further negative talk and verbally rewarding positive talk.

Any move by your client to suggest positive alternatives and steps should be rewarded with attention, acknowledgement, and praise. The following statements are examples:

That's a good idea! Do you have any more?
I'm glad that you are looking for positive steps to take.
This is the kind of discussion that's going to get somewhere.

Let's look at an example. A counsellor had listened to a client for some time explain how difficulties as a youth in school and with parents had caused problems that persisted into adulthood and were blamed for his inability to hold a job. The client seemed to want to talk continually on this theme, but as the story became repetitious the counsellor said, "Let me see if I understand what you have been saying." The counsellor then summarized all the client had said and continued, "Now our job is to do something to change things for you now. We can't do anything about your childhood, school, or parents, but we can help you make some decisions now and take some steps that will change your employment future. To do this, we need to focus on today, tomorrow, and after. We will have to leave the past behind and move forward. From now on, let's talk about the present and future. I'll try to remind you if you get off track."

The counsellor praised the client for staying on track and reminded him of the importance of dealing with the present and the positive potential of the future, rather than dwelling on the negative past. The client's excursions into the past were ignored and became fewer.

Frequently clients have difficulty identifying or accepting praise, because it is a new experience for them or because their intense focus on their problems makes them insensitive to what others say. Individuals who have experienced a great deal of negative criticism tend to tune out what people say about them, even positive things. Your praise will have to be communicated clearly, frequently, and with emphasis. Besides attention, encouragement, and praise, there is little an employment counsellor can do to reward a client, but these rewards are powerful, especially if there is a positive relationship between client and counsellor.

The effects of counselling can be extended if the client has encouragement outside the interview session. You may be able to have your client enlist the help of relatives or friends to note and reward his/her positive efforts. Your client may be able to self-reward. Most of us have learned to postpone a pleasurable activity until some unpleasant but necessary task is completed. Your client can be taught to do this. Watching television, going to a movie, and reading are easily managed activities that are rewarding for some clients.

The very best kind of self-reward is the feeling of pleasure or pride and the self-congratulation for accomplishing a task. Your client may not have experienced these feelings often and may need help. When clients report their accomplishments to you, an opportunity exists not only for you to praise them but also for you to help them feel pride and satisfaction for what they have done. For example, if your client who has been apprehensive about telephoning an employer for an appointment for an interview reports that she has made the call, your response might be among the following:

> "Good, I'm glad you were able to do that. Did you feel some apprehension before placing the call? Didn't you feel good about having done something that was difficult for you? You should feel good; you accomplished something that was hard for you to do. How do you feel about it now? You have a right to feel some pride."

These might seem to overemphasize a small accomplishment, but for a client who has rarely allowed him/herself to take pride in something accomplished, extra emphasis is necessary. In giving the next assignment, ask your client to monitor his/her own feelings when the task is completed. Encourage him/her to feel satisfaction in accomplishment.

A self-generated good feeling for a job well done is the optimal reward. It is readily available and easily managed, but not everyone has learned to use it. Not everyone has had enough experience with jobs well done to know the accompanying good feeling. Many have rarely been praised for their efforts and don't realize that their accomplishments are praiseworthy. These individuals must be taught by being praised when it's deserved and by being encouraged to recognize and feel good about their accomplishments. The next chapter includes more discussion on the use of self-reward as a self-management technique.

4. Provide for Continued Practice. The point has been made repeatedly in this chapter that employment counsellors frequently are not able to work with clients from the beginning to the end of learning strategies. Re-learning, unlearning, altering persistent habits, changing motivation levels are usually long-range projects and require continued practice to be successful. Counsellors therefore often must work out a plan of action, get the client started and provide the client with methods whereby he/she can continue and complete the plan of action independently. In providing for continued practice, counsellors are performing a transfer of learning. You will recall this step from the decision-making strategy.

The objective is to permit the client to begin to see the application of what has been learned in counselling to other situations the client will face, in this case the completion of a process already begun. In working with a motivation strategy, it is helpful for clients to see that their success depended upon three major factors - breaking the task into small units which could be easily achieved initially; accepting no excuses for not achieving; and being rewarded for what was achieved. Once a client understands these elements, he/she can begin, with the counsellor's initial assistance, to structure the remaining tasks to be accomplished so that each element is included. The counsellor will want to guide this process by asking questions for the client to consider such as:

- Is this task small enough that I believe I can achieve it quickly?
- What excuses am I likely to give myself if I don't achieve it?
- What will I do with these excuses?
- How will I reward myself when I do achieve?
- Are there others in my environment who can provide encouragement and support?
- How will I ask for their encouragement?

When the client has a plan of action worked out which contains these elements, the counsellor will structure monitoring at reasonable intervals and allow the client to proceed independently. At this point in the motivation strategy, you have already begun to put into place self-management techniques. The next chapter is devoted exclusively to this strategy and these techniques.

Summary

Motivation is learned. It is the learned ability to work for delayed rewards or for the satisfaction of completing a task. Clients who have seldom experienced rewards for persistent effort and who have known many failures and disappointments respond to immediate rather than delayed rewards. In working with these clients, the counsellor must help set realistic, short-term employment targets, encourage target-directed efforts, and reward client accomplishments.

Attention, praise, and encouragement are the counsellor's most available rewards. Friends and relatives may also be able to note and reward client progress and thus extend the benefits of counselling. Clients can be taught to manage their own rewards. The optimal reward is self-praise and feelings of satisfaction on the accomplishment of target-directed tasks. Counsellors can help clients learn to recognize and take pride in their achievements.

Additional Considerations

Using learning strategies within counselling demands a great deal of time and effort on the part of both client and counsellor. These strategies are much more demanding than are other strategies because they are directed toward changes of profound dimensions within the client. When we think of assisting a person in learning a new skill, altering a habit, or acquiring a higher level of motivation, we are committing ourselves to a complex process. The benefits to the client, if the strategy is properly employed, can be enormous.

Learning strategies are only one of three major approaches to assisting clients that are presented within this training program. Any one client may need work with more than one of the strategies. A client may, for example, have needed to clarify choices and make some basic decisions about his/her employment future before being ready to begin to consider changes in personal well-being that can be accomplished through a learning strategy.

Also it may be necessary to select more than one learning strategy. After working with your client to determine minimum current levels of skill, habits, or motivation and selecting a strategy for working toward the change indicated, it may be necessary to go back once again and determine level in a different area. For example, it may be readily apparent that the person lacks an employment related skill. As we set up a strategy to develop the skill, we may find that our client also needs assistance in altering a self-defeating habit. As previously indicated, an occasional client may need assitance with all three forms of learning.

As we assess the completion of this stage of counselling, we may become acutely aware that, despite the fine progress made and the completion of the strategy with regard to one form of learning, a second, third, or even a fourth type of learning may need to be undertaken before the person is employable. In such an instance, we would then "recycle" to SELECT STRATEGY and begin to effect change in a different type of learning. The person who has attained a greater degree of skill in being interviewed, for example, may now need assistance with her/his motivational level to become more dedicated to the job search. We will deal with combining strategies in Chapter 8.

Finally, we may find as we assess stage completion, that a client has not completed the strategy because we have not taught the strategy to the person properly. We may have presented the information too quickly, made unwarranted assumptions about the person's ability to understand concepts, or not provided a slow enough pace of instruction. For these and many other reasons, we may need to return to the EXPLAIN PROCESS TO CLIENT step and alter or improve the way in which a strategy is presented to our client.

One might well expect that a complex activity might produce some resistance on the part of the client. This can most frequently be identified with the teaching of strategy to the client and may be for any of several understandable reasons. Briefly, they can be summarized as follows:

1. Discouragement. Often clients expect change to be easy to effect. When they invest much of themselves and don't see some obvious payoff shortly, they become discouraged.

2. Uncertainty. It is sometimes the case that clients wonder whether they have made the correct move in seeing a counsellor. They may question the value of their time investment and/or the likelihood of their being helped.

3. Confusion. All but the most determined of clients will have moments of wondering just what is expected of them. Some display this through direct questioning, others through negative or hostile comments, and some through saying little or nothing.

4. Dependency. We are at an action moment in the counselling process. We want the client to be doing, not talking about doing. This is a tender moment when the issues of dependency and independency are joined. We want to foster independence and, in our eagerness to have our clients become independent, they may feel pushed and react with renewed signs of dependency.

When any of these or other forms of reluctance or uncertainty are identified, you will want to examine the nature of your relationship and the client's commitment to the task that you have mutually undertaken. When you believe that issues have been resolved, you then return to the task of teaching or explaining the strategy to the client. Of course, resistance and uncertainty can take place at any of several other times during the relationship and would be handled in the same manner. As mentioned several times previously, only the most frequent relationships between steps and stages are represented in our Systematic Employment Counselling model.

Completion of one or more learning strategies may not signal the end of counselling. It may be that further skills or exploration are considered necessary by you and your client. For example, your client may wish to attempt to undertake some self-managed work, as will be presented in chapter 7. If, however, no further work on strategies is considered necessary, you would next begin to evaluate the progress made by the client during the course of counselling. This process is presented in detail in chapter 8.

Chapter 7

Self-Management

Overview

Our actions as counsellors are directed toward helping clients to take greater command of their lives and eventually to function without our assistance. The ultimate goal of counselling is to enable clients to become the persons they want to be, to accomplish the goals they have set for themselves, and to be effective self-managers.

Regardless of how skilled the counsellor, the transition from working intimately with a client to having the client function independently is always a challenge. Many clients require and can benefit in the long-run from additional strategies that they can use to extend the effects of counselling beyond the gains made while working directly with a counsellor. They can benefit from strategies that they can use themselves the next time that they are out of work or as they confront other problems. In order to do so, clients must learn ways to identify and analyse their own problems, define their own goals, and generate alternative courses of action that might lead to goal achievement. They must learn techniques to help them independently acquire effective behaviours and abandon undesirable habits. In, effect, they must learn to be their own counsellors. Some clients, in fact, need to work independently. The very act of accepting assistance is anathema to them and they require a counsellor who will provide minimal direct intervention but will foster independent problem resolution. Other clients may be able, but reluctant, to function independently and should be encouraged to do so. We can introduce clients such as these to the use of the self-management procedures that will be taught in this chapter.

Although emphasis is placed upon fostering the independence of the client, self-management procedures are carefully developed strategies that are designed and paced to meet the needs of each individual and allow a client to consult with his/her counsellor whenever necessary.

As you move through this chapter you will quickly see that the content is not new. In chapters 5 and 6, you learned the concepts, techniques and procedures necessary to conduct self-management strategies. What you will learn in this chapter is a different application of strategies you already know. Because of this, no distinct self-management graphics are included.

As you work with clients, it is important to watch for those clients who are ready to employ self-management procedures and those who require more direct and frequent contact with you. Well constructed and well developed self-management strategies, used at the appropriate time, will not only be of benefit to the client but also will serve to lighten your work load as they preclude spending the "normal" amount of time with any given client.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Define self-management as a strategy.

2. Identify three approaches which can be used to help clients to become more self-directed.

3. Identify two techniques that are directed at changing negative self-thoughts and changing behaviour through modelled image.

4. Given a case study, identify the steps you would follow in introducing the client to a self-monitoring program.

5. Given a case study, explain the steps you would encourage the client to take in learning how to alter situations and/or learning alternative responses and explain your rationale for using the procedures you decide upon.

6. Identify four elements that a counsellor should ensure that a self-management strategy contains.

Self-Management Defined

Self-management, sometimes called self control, refers to the ability of an individual to direct his/her life, the ability to do those things that are goal-directed even though the effort is difficult and the rewards are long-delayed. It also refers to the ability to eliminate or reduce habitual behaviours that are undesired but are immediately rewarding. Saving money for some special purpose, learning a job skill in anticipation of future employment, and promptly keeping appointments for job interviews are examples of self-management.

Like other abilities, self-management is learned. Most individuals have self-management skills, but some are better self-managers than others. There are those who manage some aspects of their lives well but have difficulties with other aspects. A few seem to have a general inability to direct their own lives. For a number of individuals, the lack of self-management skills presents severe problems and may preclude steady employment.

There are a number of tested procedures for increasing an individual's ability to control or manage his/her own behaviour. These procedures can be taught to clients and used by them to attain the goals they seek. The counsellor teaches the techniques, places the client in charge of the change process, and acts as a consultant to the client during the initial steps. This approach offers several advantages. We have previously discussed how rewards can be used to increase clients' goal-directed behaviour. An obstacle confronting counsellors who wish to use rewards is that they have limited opportunities to observe clients, monitor behaviours, and reward goal-directed responses. It is true that a counsellor can often, with the client's help, enlist a family member, a friend or a fellow worker to assist in monitoring client responses and administering rewards. But enlisting such aid presents problems. Confidentiality cannot be maintained if others must be called upon to help. The commitment of others to assist may not be adequate to consistently attend to the task, and not all behaviours are performed publicly where they can be monitored by others. Assigning these tasks to clients themselves avoids these problems.

Self-management places the observation of behaviour, management of situational factors, and administration of rewards in the hands of clients. It places a great deal of responsibility on clients but they are often the best persons to monitor their own responses. No one will be more motivated to attend to these behaviours than clients themselves, and no one will have better opportunities to monitor them. Self-management strategies have many advantages over other counselling approaches including the following:

1. Clients are motivated to persist toward their goals because they see themselves as having control over their own behaviour.

2. Constant monitoring and reward are possible even when clients are alone.

3. Thoughts and feelings as well as some overt behaviours can only be monitored by the clients themselves.

4. Clients learn strategies that they can use on their own with future problems.

5. Self-management can be taught as preventive strategies before problems arise. For example, anticipating problems that might occur on the next job and pre-planning how to deal with them may prevent the recurrence of a problem.

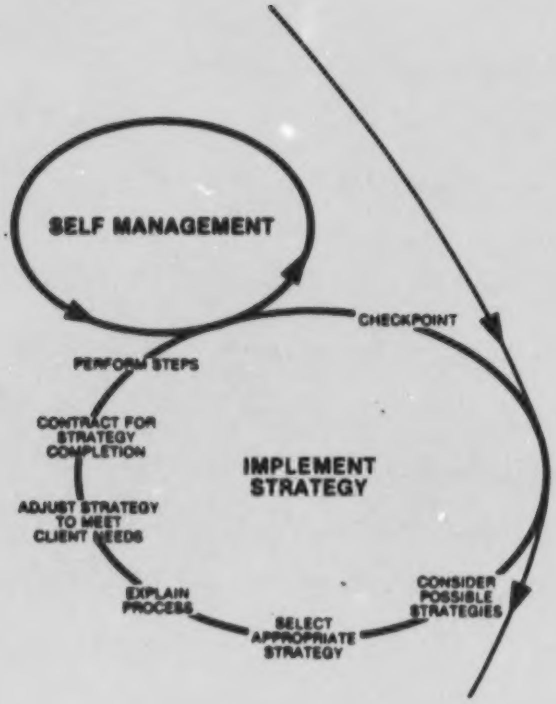
Self-Management Strategies

INSERT GRAPHIC →

In looking at the procedures and techniques useful in implementing self-management strategies, you will recognize many concepts and techniques already covered in the Decision-Making and Learning Strategies. Indeed, self-management is simply the special application of strategies that we have already discussed. In self-management the counsellor is, more than in any other strategy, an educator. He/she is attempting to do three things:

1. teach the techniques of decision-making, learning and behavioural change to the client;

2. place the client in charge of his/her own change, including the observation of his/her own behaviour, management of his/her environment and rewarding him/herself;


SELF MANAGEMENT
CHECKPOINT
PERFORM STEPS
CONTRACT FOR STRATEGY COMPLETION
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ADJUST STRATEGY TO MEET CLIENT NEEDS
EXPLAIN PROCESS
SELECT APPROPRIATE STRATEGY
CONSIDER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

3. act as a consultant to the client during change by providing assistance, encouragement and suggestions when required.

In order to successfully apply these self-management steps, counsellors must feel comfortable giving clients as much responsibility as possible in each step of the employment counselling process. This requires counsellor behaviours such as:

- not doing for clients what they can do for themselves
- expecting clients to be responsible and letting then know that responsible behaviour is expected
- not asking for more than clients are capable of, but not settling for much less
- encouraging client to take initiative
- verbally rewarding and reinforcing their positive efforts
- resisting the temptation to 'rescue' when clients flounder (as we all do when trying to learn something new).

In addition, applying self-management steps requires that counsellors know how to teach clients to use specific approaches and techniques to become more self-directed. These approaches include self-monitoring; altering conditions or situations and learning alternate responses. Techniques are directed at changing negative self-thoughts and changing behaviour through modelled image. In practice you will probably find that a combination of these approaches will be more useful than a single one. Whatever you decide works best for you and your clients, it is important to remember that consistent, regular use of the approach(es) is a large component of effective self-management. Seeming client ineffectiveness may be due not to be importence of the approach, itself but rather to its inconsistent or sporadic application.

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring involves the self-observation and self-recording of specific behaviours or specific responses to certain conditions. In some cases, this procedure alone may be sufficient to produce at least short-term changes in the behaviour being observed; that is, the new act of self-observation can produce change by itself. Furthermore, if a client experiences great difficulty in employing a self-monitoring program, it is highly unlikely that he/she will be able to follow through on the other approaches to self-management.

In using this approach, clients we asked to observe their problem relevant behaviours, note the situations and circumstances under which they occur, and record their frequency, duration, or other pertinent characteristics. These data are collected initially to establish a baseline against which progress can be measured and to identify relevant circumstances or events that may influence the behaviour. Monitoring is continued throughout the self-management program to provide a continuous progress report and feedback that itself produces change. Frequently, the process of systematic self-observation influences the behaviour being observed. For example, being told that we use 'eh' constantly may make us aware of something we were not previously aware of. We begin to listen to ourselves using it and are surprised at its frequency. Through this simple act of listening for (monitoring) it, we may begin to use it less frequently. This same procedure similarly can be effective with more complex behaviours and habits. Desired behaviours may increase and undesired responses decrease simply by observing and recording them. The knowledge that behaviour is changing in the desired direction lets us know that the behaviour is under self-control and encourages further efforts to change.

Clients must be trained as self-observers. They need to know precisely what is to be observed and recorded. If your client wants to lose his/her temper less frequently, for example, which responses would indicate loss of temper --- raising the voice, using abusive language, breaking something, or physically attacking someone? Which of these indicates loss of temper depends upon how your client defines the behaviour and the manner in which the response is to be modified. Your client may be willing to lose control verbally but want to avoid physical violence when angry. A counsellor might say, for example. "Let's focus in on exactly what you are doing when this occurs. Give me an example of your losing your temper and let me know why you believe the loss is inappropriate in the example you give." The important thing is that your client must consistently be able to identify examples of behaviour as indicating loss of temper using his/her own definition.

It is usually better to record responses immediately after they occur rather than to rely upon memory. Your clients can carry small cards on which to tally the frequencies of behaviours being self-monitored. Golf counters worn like wrist watches are useful in recording frequencies of behaviour with minimum effort. These counters are especially effective for recording behaviours that occur many times per day and can be counted accurately only by recording them as they occur. Other responses being monitored occur much less often and may be unusual enough to be remembered until they can be recorded at the end of the day. You should help your client to develop a specific plan for keeping track of and recording problem relevant behaviours.

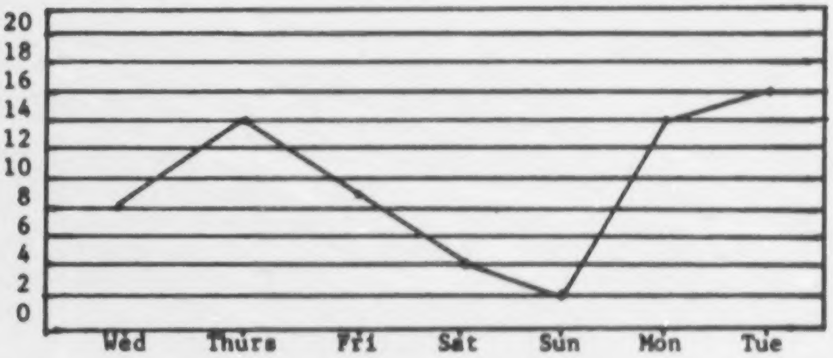
It is the response that is to be recorded. It might be a negative habit that is monitored or a new behaviour that is monitored and recorded. If a positive response is being learned to replace a negative habit, it will usually be best to have your client monitor and record the occurrence of the positive response.

A record of the self-monitored behaviour should be kept over the period of the self-management project to establish a baseline, identify patterns or trends, and to monitor progress. The most frequently used method of recording is to enter each day's tally on a chart or graph.

Example

A client was spending a great deal of time brooding about losing his last job rather than doing anything about looking for new employment. He found himself daydreaming about getting even with his former employer for his firing or imagining that his employer discovered that the firing had been a mistake and was willing to offer the client a bonus to get him back. There was nothing wrong with these wishful thoughts except that they became the client's major response to being out of work and took time and energy from potentially more productive activities.

The client needed to exercise control over these unproductive thoughts, and the first step was to monitor their occurrence. The counsellor asked his client to carry a three-by-five inch card on which to mark a tally each time such a thought occurred. Each evening the tallies were to be added and recorded on a chart that the counsellor had helped him make. The first week's results are shown in graph 2.



Graph 2. FREQUENCY OF UNPRODUCTIVE THOUGHTS REGARDING LAST EMPLOYMENT

The chart revealed that the thoughts being monitored occurred more frequently on weekdays than on weekends. The counsellor discussed with his client the possibility that these thoughts were his way of avoiding taking responsibility for getting a job. They seemed to occur on weekdays when job-seeking activities should be greatest, but on the weekends when looking for a job is not expected, the thoughts and daydreams were not as frequent. The client agreed that this was probably true. Together the client and his counsellor outlined a number of job-seeking activities for each day, and for the next week job-seeking activities were monitored.

In the establishment of a baseline, it may be important to know the locations in which the response occurs most frequently or the most likely time or set of conditions. Separate tallies may be kept to compare the behaviour during the day with during the evening, at home with outside the home, or under one set of conditions with another. Just what the separate tallies should be may be suggested by information the client and counsellor have on hand or might be suggested from an initial tally over a week or ten-day period.

In the above example, no additional kind of record was necessary because the client knew that these thoughts presented themselves when he was at home thinking about what to do to get a job. He seemed to have no energy to get out and look for work but sat and let his thoughts and imagination dwell on his last job and his firing. Once he began monitoring and increasing his activities directed at job finding, the unproductive thoughts diminished.

Self-monitoring provides continuous feedback while a self-improvement program is underway. Goal-directed changes evidenced through self-monitoring encourage further efforts. Failure to observe positive changes indicates the need for a modification in the strategy or its implementation. For some behaviours that constantly threaten to become uncontrolled, self-monitoring may have to be a life-long commitment. A successful weight-control program, for example, is seldom a short-term project, but requires constant self-monitoring. Counsellors in employment settings need not however, concern themselves with such long-term projects.

You can also teach your clients to identify behaviours of theirs that cause problems or interfere with problem solutions. They can be instructed to ask themselves the following kinds of questions:

"How do I respond in the problem situation?"
"What leads to the problem situation?"
"What do I do that makes the problem worse?"
"What do I do that helps the situation?"
"What can I do to avoid the problem?"
"How can I lessen the effect of the problem?"
"How can I minimize the negative effects once the problem situation occurs?"

Answers to these questions may suggest behaviours to be changed and new responses to be learned. It should be noted that some client behaviours are sensitive issues, and more independent clients may be very reluctant to discuss them. These types of questions can be given to clients to answer themselves. Often, realizing that something one does makes the problem worse and that this can be lessened is the first step in achieving fuller self-control. A self-monitoring plan would then follow from this increased understanding. With a little creativity you can help clients develop ways of monitoring and recording the behaviours they wish to develop or change. As mentioned previously for some clients this alone will bring about changes but for many clients self-monitoring will be a first step in a self-improvement program. This first step will provide them with a baseline of when, how often and under what circumstances the behaviour occurs. They may need approaches such as the ones which follow in order to alter the behaviour in the desired direction.

EXERCISE I

Jack Lawson wanted a job, but he lacked the self-discipline to work full time finding one. He got up late, loafed around the house and perhaps went out in the late afternoon to follow up on a job lead. He had seen an employment counsellor three times and it was clear Jack was not fulfilling his portion of the contract agreed to. When confronted with this, Jack's response was to indicate that he just couldn't get organized in the mornings and that he had to do something about that himself. The counsellor had two choices-begin termination with Jack because his commitment was not forthcoming or introduce a self-management strategy with Jack. He chose the latter and chose to begin by asking Jack to monitor his behaviour.

EXERCISE I (continued)

Assume you are the counsellor.

1. What steps would you follow to introduce Jack to a self-monitoring program?

   ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

2. What behaviour would you request that Jack monitor initially?

   ____

3. Sketch a graph or chart on which you would ask Jack to record his behaviour.

Altering the Situation

Behaviours are influenced by the situation. The boss may reveal a totally new side to his/her personality at the company picnic, for example. Responses become associated with certain environmental conditions. These situational factors become cues that evoke or control particular responses. We learn that certain behaviours are appropriate in some circumstances but are most inappropriate in others. On entering a church, our manner almost automatically becomes subdued while a football stadium or hockey rink may have just the opposite effect. Many habits we have formed throughout life are triggered or influenced by environmental cues.

Individuals can control much behaviour by choosing an environment or arranging it to facilitate desired responses. One form of self-management is for individuals to deliberately place themselves in situations that elicit or demand the behaviours they want to perform and that discourage the behaviours they want to eliminate. Some people are able to lead creative, active lives by continually placing themselves in positions where demands are placed on their time and talents. For example, a young man who can't bring himself to do regular exercise yet wants to increase his physical strength might take a summer job that demands strenuous work. Individuals can learn to handle complex jobs with great responsibility by taking jobs with increasing demands on their ability to deal with complexity and responsibility. (Remember sequenced learning). Just as one can develop positive characteristics by placing oneself in situations that demand these attributes, so too can negative attributes be minimized by changing the situation. You might help a worker in trouble on the job for frequent fights by saying, "In order to reduce the number of fights you get into, we're going to learn how to identify situations and circumstances that lead to the fights. If we can find out what triggers them, we'll find a way to stop the trigger before it goes off."

Some situations are necessary to everyday living and cannot be avoided without producing severe problems. Avoiding people to reduce anxiety in social situations is not an adequate solution. By no means can all problems be solved by avoiding situations or finding new environments. But some can. For example, a worker had been on the job for just over two weeks and was discouraged with the job and was considering quitting. The counsellor in this case asked the worker to "Tell me about some negative aspects of the working environment and what you think could be done about them". After a little exploration, the client told of a few relatively minor complaints, none of which would have warranted his quitting. These complaints had been magnified because this worker ate lunch with two fellow workers who seemed to enjoy complaining about everything. At the end of the lunch hour, the job seemed almost unbearable.

The client was helped to see that this negative attitude toward his job was largely formed in the lunch hour gripe sessions. He could assess the job on his own and could find others to eat lunch with if he didn't want to share this negative outlook.

Your client should be taught to examine the situation in which problems occur, consider changes that might influence his/her behaviour, or consider avoiding the situation in the future. Explain to the client, "There is no reason why situations have to control our lives. We can change them. All of us feel a bit helpless at times about the situations we find ourselves in, but we need to look at all of the power we have to take hold of things and see ways that we can change them so that our lives are more enjoyable and our work less frustrating."

Situations don't have to control our lives, they can be changed. Clients often feel helpless in situations and need to be encouraged to see possibilities for change.

Two special kinds of self-management problems are associated with situational factors: (a) an important response is not performed because it has not become associated with the situation that should cue or signal its performance, and (b) a response is performed excessively or indiscriminately because numerous inappropriate situations elicit its performance.

In problems of the first kind, the individual is capable of performing the response but does not because he/she does not perceive cues or has not learned to respond to the cues in the situation. For example, a school bus service employed a maintenance person to clean the buses and the bus garage at the end of the day. Part of his job was to see that the garage doors were locked before he went home. On two occasions, the doors were left unlocked, and the worker was threatened with being fired if it happened again. He left the doors unlocked because being new on the job, he had not learned to respond to cues --- putting his equipment away or turning off the lights --- that could have been reminders to lock the doors. The worker described above used his own cue, a large tag on his key ring on which he printed, "LOCK UP". When he got in his car to go home and took out his car keys, he was reminded to lock the garage if this had not yet been done. A better cue would have been to place the reminder near the light switch in the garage. He would then be reminded at a more appropriate time.

Cueing is simple and clients can easily be taught to use it. The cue chosen should be attention getting and should be associated as closely as possible with something in the normal environment that should evoke the response when the special cue is no longer used. When your client can perform the desired response but forgets to do so, he/she can gain control over this behaviour by self-cueing. This is not unlike writing oneself a reminder to keep an important appointment, but it differs in one major respect. The self-cueing that we have discussed is an attempt to associate a response with situational cues to effect a long-term behaviour change. It is not just an expedient way of remembering something on a single occasion. The test of the success of self-cueing is whether or not the response persists appropriately after the special cue is no longer used.

The second problem type involving situational cues is one in which the response to be controlled is excessively or inappropriately performed. The response is performed not only to cues that should elicit it but to many other cues or situations as well. A counsellor had worked hard to get her client a job only to learn that he was about to lose the job because of drinking at work. In discussing his drinking with him, the counsellor learned that he had been a social drinker and gradually found more and more occasions to drink including at work. He was rarely obviously drunk and did not admit to being an alcoholic, but he did drink in an increasing number of situations which became cues that elicited drinking. Although he didn't want to give up drinking, he could see that his habit was jeopardizing his employment and did want to do something about that. The counsellor suggested that he could control his drinking by allowing it in some situations but prohibiting it in others. As the work situation was most critical, it was decided to first try not to drink at work. No liquor was to be taken to work and he was to bring his lunch and not go where liquor was available. No attempt was made to regulate his drinking in other situations. He kept a record of those days he refrained from taking liquor to work and did not go where liquor was available. On days he did not bring his lunch he was to decide beforehand where he would to eat. If he could achieve this goal, then he could if he wished further restrict the circumstances under which he permitted himself to drink. This approach gave him a strategy to use if he chose.

To help your client control an excessive response, the situations under which the response is permitted to occur may be progressively narrowed until the response is only performed at the appropriate time and place. The effort is to teach your client to disassociate an habitual response from the particular cues or situations that trigger it. If one usually smokes in a certain situation, the situation itself becomes a signal to smoke. By deliberately not smoking in that situation, the power of the situation to evoke smoking diminishes and it becomes a cue for not smoking. Attending to several situations at once would be too much to ask a client. It is better to tackle one situation at a time, until the behaviour is only performed in an appropriate place or it is reduced to an acceptable level or eliminated. Clients can be taught to bring their responses under different or more precise situational control.

Learning Alternative Responses

It is frequently possible for an individual to learn to substitute an acceptable alternate response for the undesirable one. Such an alternate response should result in the same, or nearly the same, immediate positive consequence as the undesirable response but without the long term negative results. For example, reducing anxiety by muscle relaxation, listening to music, strenuous exercise or engaging in a creative activity have more positive long term consequences than drinking too much, nail biting, or over-eating.

In using this approach, the client is taught to identify the situations in which the undesired response occurs and to develop alternative responses in each situation in which the established response is to be eliminated. Cueing may be necessary to remind the client to use the alternate response until the new behaviour becomes associated with the natural environmental cues.

Using the following steps you can help your clients to develop alternate responses to replace undesirable behaviours:

1. Teach them to identify the immediate rewards associated with the undesirable behaviour. Attention, anxiety reduction, and avoidance of work or responsibility are often the rewards of non-productive behaviours.

2. Help them learn to generate possible alternatives that will achieve immediate rewards but will not have long-term negative consequences.

3. Teach them to use cues to remind them to perform the alternative response in the appropriate situation.

EXERCISE II

This exercise continues from Exercise I with the client Jack Lawson.

The counsellor asked Jack to do two major tasks.

EXERCISE II (continued)

A) Answer for himself:

- What leads to the situation of not being able to get organized?
- What does he do instead of getting organized?
- What might he do avoid the problem?

B) Keep a daily tally of:

- How often and when he thinks of getting organized but doesn't.

Through this process, several aspects of Jack's difficulty were revealed:

a) He thought frequently about the need to get organized and the fact that he did nothing about it bothered him.

b) Instead of getting organized for job search, he busied himself doing many useful tasks. He could be very organized at doing things other than jobs-search. He was not lazy.

c) When he was busy doing other things, he felt useful and content. As the day wore on, his anxiety about not having looked for a job would increase. He would then become bored, frustrated with himself, would go job-hunting and it would usually be too late to be productive.

EXERCISE II (continued)

d) Jack lived with his parents. Each evening his father would ask him what he had done with himself all day and if he had finally landed a job. This made Jack angry and he would angrily retort that he hadn't wasted his time, report what he had done including looking for a job and he would tell his father there just weren't any good jobs available or that he wasn't good enough to get one.

Using what you have learned about helping clients learn how to alter situations and/or learn alternative responses:

i) What steps would you now encourage Jack to take?

ii) Explain your rationale for using the procedures outlined above.

The Use of Self-Reward in Self-Management

During the learning phase, a new response will not automatically produce a positive consequence. Learners are inept and their efforts do not immediately produce the results they want. Monitoring unproductive behaviours and realizing how often they interfere with progress is not immediately rewarding - it is more likely immediately depressing. Attempting to avoid or alter a situation and/or learning to minimize a habit means giving up something that, for whatever reason, contained its own reward. Otherwise we wouldn't be doing it. It is difficult to give up a reward for what initially may feel like a punishment. Counsellor use of praise, encouragement and acknowledgement of client achievements is very important throughout self-management strategies. In addition clients can be taught to reward themselves to encourage goal-directed efforts. Self-reward when it is made contingent upon goal-directed behaviour is a self-management strategy. Individuals need rewards to motivate self-improvement and must be able to monitor their own responses and to reward responses they determine to be goal directed. You may tell your client, "It is important that you work hard to postpone any rewarding event until after you have completed a particular task or assignment. Remember, the best rewards are those that you greatly enjoy and can produce by yourself without reliance upon others." Watching television, buying something long wanted, visiting a friend, or just relaxing are all possible rewards. Most clients cannot look to their "environment" to reward them. Your client will have to identify his or her own rewards. These rewards are introduced to encourage positive steps that are themselves difficult and nonrewarding. The steps should be quite possible to accomplish. You want the client to earn the reward because it is the earning of the reward rather than the promise of one that influences behaviour most.

Example

A client had done well in secondary school with little effort and without developing good study habits. Because he was having trouble finding work, she enrolled in a word-processing course to upgrade her skills. As a student in the class, her poor performance prompted her to see a counsellor. In counselling he was quickly able to identify the cause of her poor performance as being too little time spent on studies. Other possibilities were explored, but the lack of study effort was verified as central to the problem. Her home environment was not a problem. She had time and a place to study. She managed to find a good many things to do rather than study. One of the most time consuming of her diversions was photography. She was an avid photographer and enjoyed keeping up with the latest information and techniques.

The counsellor asked the client to record the amount of time she actually spent doing photography or activities related to photography. She was then asked to estimate how much time would be necessary for her to do well in her word-processing course. (Her long-range goal was still to become a word-processer). It was then suggested that she devise a plan in which she would use photography to reward increased study time. She was to deny herself this recreational activity until she had spent a given amount of time studying. The amount of additional study time necessary to earn the reward was to be small at first and gradually increased until the study time goal was reached. Using this self-management plan, the client was able to increase her study time and to earn grades high enough to pass her course. The experience also gave her confidence enough to tackle concerns of a related nature, once she found a word-processing job.

Self-monitoring, altering situations and learning alternate responses, combined with learning to self-reward can be employed individually or in a combination by clients in self-management programs. You act as a consultant to your client, but it is your client who makes the observations, changes the situation, chooses and employs alternate responses, or self-administers rewards. In taking an active part in their own counselling program, your clients will learn strategies that they can use when subsequent problems arise.

Cognitive Self-Management Techniques

We have been discussing helping clients bring about changes in themselves. We have focused on changes in overt behaviours, but individuals also respond cognitively and emotionally to events in their lives. Thoughts, like feelings and attitudes are private events not directly subject to objective verification. Nevertheless, they influence behaviour and are themselves amendable to change. We are concerned here with two kinds of internal response. First, there are the annoying or debilitating thoughts or feelings that are themselves responses to be changed. Second, we are concerned with deliberately produced thoughts that may have a positive influence on overt behaviours. Both techniques to be discussed can be incorporated into the learning strategy covered in Chapter 6 or can be taught to clients as part of a self-management strategy.

Changing Negative Self-Thoughts

Internal responses that are themselves targets for change are the negative self-defeating thoughts, the gloomy, pessimistic feelings, the unproductive, self-depreciating attitudes that interfere with the client's goal attainment. These internal responses can be eliminated or reduced using a self-management program. Thought stopping is one technique that has been used successfully. In this approach the client is asked to think of the negative self-thoughts. While the client concentrates on these thoughts, the counsellor very loudly says "STOP!". This is practiced several times with the client rather than the counsellor saying "stop". The client is asked to practice this at home several times a day and to use the technique whenever he/she begins to dwell on negative thoughts or feelings. Eventually the word, "stop", can be thought rather than spoken aloud.

Another approach for dealing with negative thoughts is to find other things to do or to think about when pessimistic thoughts occur. Hobbies which require concentration-reading, serving, repair work, renovations and any others that demand full attention are good substitutes. Remembering good times past, or anticipating better times in the future can replace brooding or self-depreciation. It is well worthwhile although difficult to help your client to generate a list of the positive things in his/her life to use to think about whenever negative thoughts occur. Once the alternative thoughts have been identified, some means, perhaps a cue, will have to be used to remind the client to abandon the old thought patterns and begin the new ones.

Sometimes negative thoughts so dominate a client that little progress in counselling can be made. It may be necessary to confront such a client with this conclusion, give him/her techniques for changing the self-defeating thoughts, and postpone any other goals until a more positive outlook has been achieved. You may need to say, for example, "We're not getting anywhere at the moment. One reason may be that you are so caught up in your self-doubts that you can't see beyond to being in a situation where you are happily employed. Is that the way you feel"? If the client confirms this the counsellor can suggest teaching the client a few techniques to begin to tackle the self-doubts, place the client on a self-management program and schedule another interview in a few weeks to assess programs and whether employment goals seem more appropriate at that time.

Cognitions That Change Behaviour

Vividly imagining how one would like to respond in a situation can provide a model for action. The imagined model may be based upon previous observations of others or remembered previous experiences in which one's own responses were effective. As you are reading this, stop for a moment and imagine how you would safely exit the building if there were a fire just outside of the door of the room that you are now in. In your imagination, you might construct several alternate models for action in such an emergency. Wouldn't having such models in advance help in an actual emergency?

A person anticipating some difficult social interaction can develop several models in imagination and choose one to use in the actual situation. Many people use their imagination to escape problems; we are suggesting here that imagination be used creatively to help solve problems. Most of us have daydreamed and imagined ourselves as we would like to be. Often our fantasies are too unrealistic to be accomplished, but many individuals have been guided by more realistic self-projected models. Clients can learn to do this although you may need to challenge the client to engage in this type of activity by saying: "Your imagination can be a potent source of assistance if you can focus it upon something positive that you would like to accomplish. You will need to carefully focus your imagination upon something that truly is attainable. Think of a creative way of going about approaching your boss in a manner that will not cause her to dislike you, but will allow her to see your favourable side "

The object of using an imagined model is for the individual to have a clear picture of the response desired. Once the behaviour is clear in the imagination, it can be mentally rehearsed. The imagined response can be tried out mentally in a variety of settings. This is simply another application of modelling as discussed in Chapter 6 but instead of the counsellor being the modelling source, the client is taught to find this source within him/herself.

In such rehearsals in the imagination, one can try out various modifications of the modeled response and pose problems that might occur in an actual enactment of the response. Rehearsals in imagination allow responses to be practiced that occur infrequently in an individual's life -- asking for a raise, bringing a grievance to an employer's attention, apologizing for missing work, etc. Mental rehearsal allows one to practice responses that would require special settings or situations if rehearsals were to be actual rather than imagined. It permits the practice of potentially threatening responses in safety.

Rewards can be self-administered in imagination with a positive self-statement --- "I've done well" "I'm making progress" or a positive mental image or a feeling of well being. Many of our efforts are sustained because we have learned to feel good on accomplishing a task. However, some clients have not often experienced success and have seldom had occasion to self-reward or think positive self-thoughts. These clients can learn this kind of self-reward and use it to influence their own behaviour by deliberately thinking positive self-thoughts when successes have been achieved. They will learn it from you as you praise them for their accomplishments. In addition, you will need to encourage them to be self-congratulatory when they successfully achieve a step toward their goal. You can urge them, "Don't feel shy about being proud of your accomplishments. It's OK to think, "I really did very well for a first attempt." You don't need to do everything right before rewarding yourself. Give yourself praise for trying--and succeeding."

EXERCISE III

In structuring a self-management strategy with a client, the counsellor should ensure that the strategy provides for four important elements.

List these four elements.

1. ____

2. ____

3 ____

4. ____

Summary

The approaches suggested in this chapter could be directed by the counsellor, but it is recommended that clients be trained in their application and, in effect, become their own counsellors. Using self-management strategies, clients are in control of the change process, and the counsellor serves as a consultant and a resource person. Early in the counselling process, it may not be possible for clients to assume full responsibility for progress, but such full responsibility is the goal of counselling. Opportunities are available even in the initial stages of counselling for clients to make decisions and actively participate in the development of a self-improvement program. These opportunities should be used to help individuals develop self-management skills. Increased client independence should be encouraged as counselling is continued. At the same time, discretion must be exercised so that we provide a clear understanding and don't send clients away in a confused state, yet are sensitive to their need and/or desire for independent action. Any feelings on the part of clients that they are being "rushed out the door" may well result in various forms of withdrawal, hostility, and rejection. As we have learned previously, it is best not to ignore these behaviours. Rather, we work directly to improve our relationship and shared understanding of our purposes in counselling in order that our client can feel fully committed.

When both client and counsellor are satisfied that the self-management strategies have been fully carried out and all parts of the plan have been completed, we next check to determine whether or not any other type of strategy is needed. We will deal with combining strategies in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Combining Strategies

Overview

As mentioned earlier, strategies are plans of action tailored to meet specific employment targets. What we are talking about here is really not more than a procedural plan to help move a client from point A (present behaviour) to point B (desired behaviour). Although, this sounds as if it would be a simple task we are sure you realize by now that it is not. Unlike the other phases in the Systematic Employment Counselling process, the implementation of various strategies to effect change will vary greatly both in the time (number/length of interviews) and the tasks (client assignments during/between interviews) required. A client's learning rate, the complexity of the concern, and the strategy selected all contribute to this great diversity in time and tasks as well as to the added counsellor challenge!

So far we have assumed that only one strategy will be necessary for a client. It is important to recognize that strategies are not always used in isolation. Although the strategies presented to you thus far have been provided one at a time for instructional purposes, in the "real world" these strategies as well as others are often required in combination. If strategies are used in combination, both you and your client will have to decide which to use first - or whether to apply the strategies simultaneously. This, of course, also adds to the great diversity in time and tasks that is characteristic of this stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling process.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together in chart form the numerous strategies to which you have been introduced in the present manual as well as to discuss how they might best be combined to help your client(s) to attain employment target(s).

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Briefly describe the intent of the various strategies you have been taught (one paragraph each).

2. Given a list of client employment issues, indicate what strategy(ies) might be used, how they might be sequenced and why.

Repertoire of Strategies

As mentioned in Chapter 4, we assumed that each of you has developed your own approach(es) to help move a client towards problem resolution and thus, employability. What we have attempted to do in the preceding chapters on strategies was to simply add to your repertoire numerous approaches that might help you to effectively and efficiently deal with a wide range of client concerns that are of an employment-related nature. The counselling strategies described thus far have been used successfully with many clients. They, of course, do not exhaust the list of all possible strategies, but have been selected because they can be used with relative ease, once you have become accustomed to them (believe it or not!). Let us see now what strategies you have at your disposal by way of a chart.

EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING STRATEGIES

CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

						Learning			Self-Management			
										Approaches		
	Testing	Information	Sequenced Learning	Decision-Making	Skills	Habits	Motivation	Self-Monitoring	Alter Situation	Alter Responses	Cognitive Techniques	Other
1. Demonstrates reluctant behaviour												
2. Doesn't see that his/her employment problem relates to own behaviour												
3. Doesn't know more appropriate response												
4. Lacks a necessary skill or response												
5. No idea of what occupation for which he/she is best suited												
6. Makes inappropriate employment response												
7. Has difficulty in decision-making												
8. High anxiety interferes with work performance												
9. Doesn't know where his/her aptitudes are												
10. Unmotivated to do something about employment problem												
11. Has difficulty in planning and organizing												
12. Thinks unduly self-critical thoughts												
13. Uses self-defeating behaviours to avoid anxiety or work responsibility												
14. Gets along poorly with co-workers												
15. Procrastinates about doing something to resolve employment difficulty												
16. Doesn't know how to find out about work possibilities												
17. Unable to plan and implement a job search												
18. Performs poorly in interviews												
19. Has unrealistic work expectations												
20. Demonstrates high dependency on counsellor to resolve employment difficulty												

A quick perusal of the chart clearly indicates that now you have a number of strategies from which to choose. In chapter 4, we stressed that counsellors sometimes select a strategy that is highly complex and far exceeds the needs of the client. In some cases a practical, uncomplicated strategy can be used, thus, reducing the amount of time the client needs to spend in counselling and probably producing more predictable results. Sequenced learning is one such strategy. In other cases, a client's concern is basically related to information needs or to testing needs (some of you were introduced to the latter strategy in the test certification program). Often, however, you will require a series of more elaborate strategies that will help you deal with client concerns of a more complex nature. Thus, we have chosen to introduce you to various decision-making, learning, and self-management strategies.

Although the main purpose of the chart has been to help you put into some prespective what you have learned with respect to available strategies, we encourage you to adapt or use the chart for several additional purposes:

1. The chart can serve as a very useful planning device. By simply filling in a client's employment target to the left of the chart or at the very minimum his/her employment concern it will be possible to indicate for your own record purposes, the most appropriate strategy(ies) to apply. This will enable you of course to look at and structure specific approaches in an organized way.

2. A modified version of the chart could also be presented to the client so that he/she will be clear on what will be occuring during strategy implementation (explain strategy step) and what is expected of him/her (contracting). Having been exposed to a chart outlining the specific approaches to be taken it will be easier for a client to verify his/her commitment to the course(s) of action to be taken.

Finally, as alluded to in the beginning of this chapter, often a variety of strategies are necessary in order to treat the complexity and range of problems presented by a single client. Consider the case of Leo, a young man who has no idea of the kind of occupation he would like to enter. Leo definitely wants to prepare himself for some type of occupation but is completely at a loss concerning what it might be and how he might go about deciding. Pause for a moment to think of an appropriate employment target. Whatever you decided upon, we do know that a number of strategies could be employed to attain the employment target you have just generated for Leo. Starting with the simplest first, we suggest that Leo may benefit from some information seeking skills as well as testing. Should his concern not be resolved after the application of these strategies, then decision-making may be of benefit. Several points to keep in mind when strategies are used in combination include:

1. Whenever possible the least complicated strategy should be tried first.

2. A counsellor should generally begin with the strategy that has the greatest chance of getting the client employed quickly.

3. A counsellor may spontaneously decide to change strategies and this is fine as long as the client knows what is going on and agrees to change.

4. Some strategies such as the motivation strategy are applied within another strategy quite easily by ensuring that the steps within a given action plan are small and success oriented.

5. The amount of time available for counselling is important in deciding which combination of strategies to use. It is impossible to say how much of the entire employment counselling process will be devoted to using strategies - as mentioned earlier - it may be little or it may be great. It depends on many variables, the most important being the nature of the concern and your workload. Since some strategies can be used in a shorter time span that others this becomes a major consideration.

EXERCISE I

Given the following list of employment issues, indicate appropriate strategies that might be useful for the client. Also indicate how they might be sequenced and why.

(a) Phyllis, a thirty-four year-old divorcee is unable to pay child care costs for her son on her salary. However, if she quits work, she won't have any income, as her ex-husband is out of work and can't help out at all. She doesn't know what to do and she is very depressed.

(b) Mr. Brown feels that his boss is constantly criticizing him in front of others in the office. He works in a small office, can't really get out of the sight of his boss, and has become increasingly nervous and distraught.

(c) Ms. Carleton is feeling anxious because her supervisor has unexpectedly left and the new supervisor hasn't arrived yet. She was very close to her old supervisor and doesn't know anything about the new one. Her work is suffering and she is scared.

EXERCISE I (continued)

(d) Mr. Wright, age forty-five, married with three children, was just told he'd have to take a 20 percent salary cut in order to keep his job. The firm for which he works has been having difficulty for several months. As Mr. Wright's living costs have risen considerably due to inflation, he does not think he can manage on this reduced salary.

As you gain experience, your self-confidence in the use of strategies alone and in combination will increase and you will feel more comfortable both in trying out new strategies and adapting the present ones to meet your client's needs. Do not be afraid to let the client know if you are trying something you have not used before. You can say something like "I have an idea of what we may try and I'm not sure how it will work. Let's try it and see if it works." Pretending to be an expert when you're not can backfire and even if it doesn't, it is of questionable ethics. On the other hand, if you stick with the familiar and the comfortable, you won't be able to extend your capabilities.

Summary

In working with clients, all of whom present somewhat unique concerns and circumstances, you will find great use for the strategies we have introduced to you. Before leaving the "IMPLEMENT STRATEGY" phase of the Systematic Employment Counselling model, we would like to make two points of caution.

First, one error that counsellors often make is to view a strategy as a panacea or cure-all. Remember, no one strategy used in isolation from other techniques or used apart from the basic counselling relationship will prove to be that effective. You must learn to modify and adapt various combinations of effective strategies according to your own personality and preferences and the need of your client.

Second, you must practice using strategies. Like all skills, they will not be as effective when you first start using them, but your skill will grow as you practice.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Describe the intent of the various strategies you have been taught. (one paragraph each)

   (a) Testing
   (b) Information
   (c) Sequenced Learning
   (d) Decision-making
   (e) Learning
   (f) Self-management

2. Indicate for each of the following client concerns what strategy(ies) might be useful, the sequence (where appropriate) and why.

Client	Strategy(ies) Required
(a) Unable to make a decision	
(b) Wants to alter behaviour, but stay in same job	
(c) Wants to alter behaviour independently and stay in same job	
(d) Undecided on work field and wants to alter behaviour	

Client	Strategy(ies) Required
(e) Undecided on work field and wants to work independently in altering behaviour	
(f) Wants to alter behaviour and uncertain of new work field to choose	
(g) Wants to alter behaviour independently and uncertain of new work field to choose	
(h) Wants to alter behaviour and continue change program independently	
(i) Unable to make a decision, wants to alter behaviour and continue change program independently	

Chapter 9

Evaluating Progress and Outcomes

A
A
A
B
C
A
C
B
B
C
B

Overview

Evaluation is a largely overlooked area in the field of counselling. This is unfortunate, especially for the counsellor. In all endeavours, people need feedback on how they are performing. The setting of targets and actually reaching them through one's own initiative is intrinsically rewarding and motivating. Performance feedback tells us not only how well we are performing but helps to identify where we need to improve. Lack of information on our levels of competency tends to make us rigid in our methodologies. The Systematic Employment Counselling model includes both Client and Counsellor evaluation components. The focus is on short-term evaluation designed to assist counsellors to continue to improve their performance and to assist clients to continue their efforts towards independent problem resolution.

The general purposes of this chapter are: (a) to help you understand the rationale for evaluation in employment counselling; (b) to provide a procedure for conducting the evaluation process, including terminating counselling with a client and closing the case; and (c) to introduce you to self-monitoring as an important process for counsellor learning and organizational accountability.

Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter it is expected that you will be able to:

1. List and explain the major purposes of evaluation in employment counselling.
2. State the sequence of steps in the systematic approach to evaluating client performance, terminating counselling and monitoring client performance.
3. Explain the emphasis on behaviour change in evaluation and the role of the client in evaluating client performance.
4. Explain the procedures to be followed when the counselling target has not been attained.
5. Describe how the systematic approach can facilitate closure.
6. List the three purposes of Terminating Counselling.
7. State the causes of client and counsellor resistance to terminating and propose a method for dealing with each.

8. Explain and give an example of learning transfer.

9. Give an example of a case in which monitoring is appropriate and inappropriate.

10. List the five essential pieces of recorded information needed to close a case.

11. Explain the importance of evaluating counsellor performance.

12. List the four major areas to be considered in evaluating counsellor performance.

13. Name three sources of evaluation of counsellor performance.

Purposes of Evaluation

The last four stages within the Systematic Employment Counselling model are:

(a) Evaluate Client Performance
(b) Terminate Counselling
(c) Monitor Client Performance and
(d) Evaluate Counsellor Performance

None of these stages is time consuming but each of them is necessary. We have emphasized, in both Assessment and this module, the importance of creating with the client a sense of movement towards goal and target achievement through concrete action steps. The final stages of the model, from the client's perspective, focus on the amount of movement which has actually been achieved. This is both rewarding and reinforcing to the client to continue efforts independently. At the same time it brings to a logical conclusion the counselling process in which the client has been actively involved.

From the counsellor's perspective, the final stages of the model provide feedback and structure an opportunity to improve counselling efforts with future clients.

The inclusion of a formal evaluation component is likely of no surprise to you. The Systematic Employment Counselling model has been based on knowing clearly where one is heading in terms of goals, targets and strategies. With these as the model's foundation, it follows that one will be able to identify when one has arrived at the target and when it is appropriate for employment counselling to terminate. In addition, if we reflect for a moment on the movement throughout the system, it will be clear that evaluation is not a "new" idea. Evaluation has been built into the system from the first counsellor-client meeting which began to focus on specific target formulation. It continued with the formulation of a counsellor-client contract and the presence of recycling and checkpoint to ensure that client and counsellor verify and monitor progress continuously. If you have followed the system well, you have been evaluating in an on-going way and it is highly unlikely that the evaluation stage will contain any surprises. Difficulties in progress towards the target will have been identified much earlier; decreased motivation to continue will have been identified and dealt with; the target and/or contract may have been re-defined in order to more accurately reflect the client's needs and capacity to change in the necessary directions. Very likely by the time you have reached evaluation as a formal step, the target will have been partially if not wholly met.

You may ask, "Why include it as a separate step at all?" There are 3 major reasons:

(1) We evaluate for the client. The provision of an explicit period of time where counsellor and client look objectively at how far the client has come is highly reinforcing of continued growth and success. The opportunity for the client to explore how to apply what has been learned in counselling to other life situations he/she may experience is productive learning.

(2) We evaluate for ourselves. There may be a large distinction between a partially achieved target and a wholly achieved target. What made the difference? Was it my client; was it me? Could the target have been wholly reached had I proceeded slightly differently? When I face this situation again, is there something I want to remember to try to do differently?

No model can provide scientific answers to these questions but again, the provision of an explicit period of time for counsellors to reflect on these questions is a vital source of learning and growth.

(3) We evaluate for others. In most endeavours, the concept of accountability is increasing in importance. Organizations want to see tangibly and visibly the results of employee efforts. Employment counsellors need to be able to demonstrate that their interventions with clients make a difference. To do so, they need to be able to discuss their progress with clients in precise, common and goal-directed language.

For example:

"This is the target we established ...

We aimed to achieve it at this level and standard and within this time frame ...

These are the plans we designed to achieve it ...

Our progress is ...

The client is now"...

This language is meaningful and results oriented. In addition it provides for the inclusion of qualitative change as well as quantitative change. The number of clients placed appropriately into stable jobs must of course be the major criterion of success as employment counsellors. At the same time, the accomplishments of clients who have not yet found employment but are progressing through counselling towards employment are extremely important and cannot be overlooked.

Let us begin to look carefully at each remaining stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling model.

Evaluate Client Performance

The steps within this stage can be visualized as follows

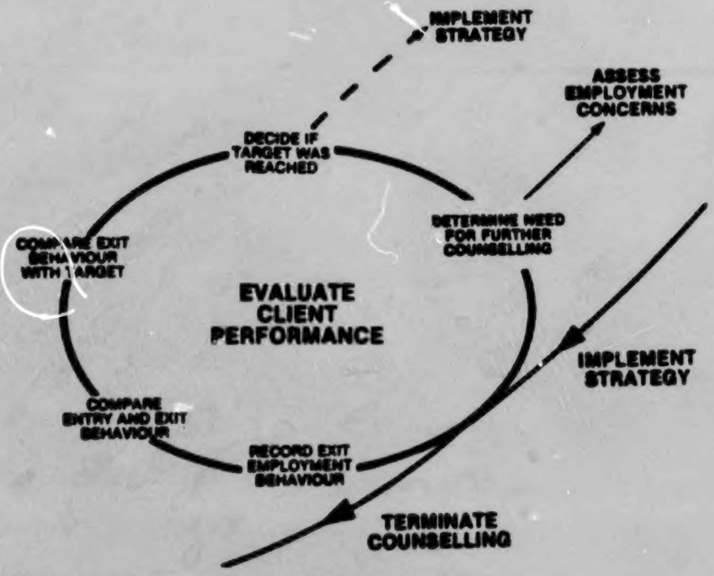

IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
ASSESS EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS
DECIDE IF TARGET WAS REACHED
DETERMINE NEED FOR FURTHER COUNSELLING
COMPARE EXIT BEHAVIOUR WITH TARGET
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE
IMPLEMENT STRATEGY
COMPARE ENTRY AND EXIT BEHAVIOUR
RECORD EXIT EMPLOYMENT BEHAVIOUR
TERMINATE COUNSELLING

Figure 9. Sequence of Steps in Evaluate Client Performance

Two points are very important to apply when proceeding with these steps. The focus of this text has been on helping clients to develop more adaptive behaviours. These behaviours have included decision-making, the learning of skills and habits, increasing one's capacity to use information and increasing one's level of motivation. Successful learning in any of these areas implies a change in the client's behaviour. A change in behaviour may result in the client feeling better about him/herself. During this stage the focus however is not on how the client feels about what he/she has learned, but rather on the client behaviour which demonstrates concretely that learning has taken place. A client may report, for example that he/she feels more confident about the ability to make decisions; the focus in evaluation is on whether the client has actually decided. A client may report feeling more motivated; the test is whether the client has performed action(s) indicative of increased motivation.

The first major point to apply is to retain the focus on client behaviour, not on client feeling.

The second major point is that evaluating the client's progress and achievement is the responsibility of the client. This stage is an opportunity for client recall and client reflection on progress through counselling and through the efforts made as a result of counselling. The questions which are being addressed are, "What is happening now?" and "How does this compare with before?" Clearly the client is in the best position to know. The counsellor has access only to what is happening within the counselling sessions and what the client reports is happening outside. The client knows how much change has actually occurred. The counsellor's role is to facilitate the client's reflection and recall by assisting the client to review, to focus, to summarize and to listen to the client's self-evaluation.

Keeping these two points in mind, the steps of this stage are easy to follow

Look at the following dialogue and note each of the steps illustrated in Figure 9. You will recall the client Nancy from the chapter on Decision-Making:

Counsellor: Well Nancy, I know you're now in the middle of your two week holiday and you had planned to use this time to look full-time for a new job. I'd very much like to know how it's going.

(DETERMINE WHERE CLIENT IS NOW)

Nancy: It's really going very well. I've had four interviews so far I have one job offer, but it's for a 5 day work week and I've asked for a few days to think it over. We discussed a 4 day work week and she said it might be possible but not right away. The other three interviews were for 4 day work weeks but they don't have any openings. I still have two more places to try.

Counsellor: That's very encouraging Nancy. Good for you. Do the other two places offer 4 day work weeks as well?

Nancy: One does, it's from the list you gave me. The other one my boss suggested so I don't know about it as yet.

Counsellor: Have you considered what you'll do if the 5 day work week seems to be the only option right now?

Nancy: No, I really haven't. I mean I think about it but I don't want to worry about it until I'm sure I have to.

Counsellor: That sounds like quite a change for you Nancy - to be able to postpone worrying until you're sure to have to. That's excellent.

Nancy: Thanks. I don't feel as worried. I guess knowing there is one sure job offer has helped a lot, even if it's not exactly what I want.

Counsellor: And how about the other areas you were having difficulty with - all your commitments and not having enough time or enough of you to spread around. How's it going there?

Nancy: Pretty good, I guess. I still feel guilty about not entertaining as much but it's a relief not trying to do everything. And I think I have a little more energy. And I'm sure looking forward to a month off.

Counsellor: So you've been able to follow through on that as well. That represents quite a change from when I first met you. Let's look at some of these changes Nancy. Can you describe them as you see them?

Nancy: Well I think the main thing is that I'm not so panicked by everything. I'm slowing down a little and I seem, as I said, to have more energy.

Counsellor: So you're feeling less pressured - that's great - and that must be changing how you're handling things too.

Nancy: Yes it is.

(RECORD EXIT EMPLOYMENT BEHAVIOUR)

Counsellor: Let's see if we can record specifically some of the things you're doing that are different.

Nancy: Well it's been only a short time I know. It almost killed me to call and cancel my volunteer work for 3 weeks, but once I did it, I felt relieved.

Counsellor: (recording)

So one thing you did was cancel a commitment which was very important to you. It was difficult but you did it and you're feeling good about it.

Nancy: Yes, I really am. I cancelled my course too and that one I don't want to go back to. That was just too much. And I've tried very hard to use this two weeks to look for a job - and that's working.

Counsellor: That's a lot of accomplishments Nancy - is there anything else? (continuing to record).

Nancy: Just one interesting thing. I always thought I had to do everything; that it was expected of me. I'm finding out that's not necessarily so. Nobody seems to think less of me because I'm doing less.

(COMPARE ENTRY AND EXIT BEHAVIOUR)

Counsellor: So there has been a side benefit you didn't expect.

Nancy: Yes there has. I'm not sure how long it will last but it's definitely better than when I started.

(COMPARE EXIT BEHAVIOUR WITH TARGET)

Counsellor: Let's take a look at the target we started out with Nancy and see how close you've come to reaching it. Do you remember it?

Nancy: Yes I do. We agreed that I would reduce my commitments in three weeks; well, really, to stop them for three weeks and to have a list of employees ready so I could start job hunting.

(DECIDE IF TARGET WAS REACHED)

Counsellor: Would you say you've reached the target you set Nancy?

Nancy: Yes I would - maybe even a little more because I've actually had the job interviews.

(DETERMINE NEED FOR FURTHER COUNSELLING)

Counsellor: That's really good Nancy. You seem well on your way. (pause) Now, do you have any other concerns you would like to discuss?

Nancy; Oh sure, I have a million of them. But I suppose you mean just those that have to do with getting a job.

Counsellor: Yes, any concerns that you think are important to talk about that might get in the way of achieving what you want in a job and in dealing with all your commitments.

Nancy: No, I can't think of anything else right now. Maybe if I don't get a 4 day work week I might want some help deciding what to do.

(PROCEED TO TERMINATE COUNSELLING)

Counsellor: That would be fine Nancy, but at least for now you're ready to continue on your own.

Nancy: Yes, I guess so.

This example is a highly successful counselling intervention with a very co-operative client. Evaluation will not always be as straight forward nor as completely successful. We will look momentarily at a more complex example of evaluation.

Recalling the two major points to be applied which were discussed earlier - 1) Evaluation of client performance belongs to the client and 2) The evaluation focus is on behaviour not feelings; let's add two more points for consideration When the employment target has not been attained, one looks first to the target itself (was it the right target?) and secondly to the plan to achieve the target (was it the right plan?) to identify the trouble spots. Three possibilities exist within the target. It has been achieved totally; it has been achieved partially; it has not been achieved at all. Similarly three possibilities exist within the plan to achieve the target. It has been implemented as agreed; it has been partially implemented; it has not been implemented at all. Keeping this mental set in mind, the counsellor is in a good position to identify areas of difficulty and to recycle, as required. Let's now look at a different example:

Counsellor: Hi Jim. I'm anxious to know how things have been progressing with your interview skills and with job interviews. Can you bring me up to date.

(DETERMINE WHERE CLIENT IS NOW)

Jim: Not so great I guess. I've been practicing. I've read the stuff you gave me, I go over answers again and again but when it comes time to actually making an appointment for an interview, I'm just so sure I'll flub it again that I don't do it. I think you're wasting your time.

Counsellor: You're feeling pretty discouraged Jim. Let's back up a bit. Tell me a little about your practicing. What have you tried to do?

Jim: Well, what you told me to do except for the practicing with my buddy. He's lousy at interviewing and we just end up laughing or I get mad. Either way I end up more discouraged.

Counsellor: So trying out your skills with your friend hasn't worked for you.

Jim: No it sure hasn't.

Counsellor: And getting job interviews by yourself hasn't been very successful either.

Jim: No, it hasn't worked at all. I just can't seem to do that.

Counsellor: I'm thinking back to our last interview where you and I role played a job interview. How did you feel after that?

Jim: That was good. I felt I was learning something. I was remembering to introduce myself, to look at you, to answer questions better.

(COMPARE ENTRY AND EXIT BEHAVIOUR)

Counsellor: I thought so too. You were doing very well.

Jim: That's not much good unless you can give me a job though.

Counsellor: Well maybe that's jumping a little. We know you can learn the skills you need; you've proven that here. What we have to discover is how to help you transfer what you've learned here to real interviews. Would you agree with that?

Jim: I suppose so.

Counsellor: You remember Jim when we first talked about setting a target we could work toward, we agreed that we would change it or adjust it if we needed to. Maybe a good place to begin is to look at that target and see if we still think it's the one we want.

(COMPARE EXIT BEHAVIOUR WITH TARGET)

Jim: Sure, OK.

Counsellor: OK Jim, what we had agreed to work toward was "to practice and learn 5 specific interview skills so well that you obtain 3 job interviews in the repair field on your own initiative within 3 weeks." How does that sound to you now?

Jim: Like I've flubbed it.

Counsellor: I certainly understand that you're feeling discouraged. Can you see any progress at all toward the target we established?

(RECYCLE TO ESTABLISHING TARGET)

Jim: Well, I guess I have learned some new interview skills but that's about it.

Counsellor: And that's certainly a change from when we started. How well do you think you've learned these skills.

Jim: I guess well enough for here but not out there.

Counsellor: So you would say there's some progress in the first part of our target.

Jim: Yeah, I would.

Counsellor: I would certainly agree. Now how about the rest? Does that still look like something you can achieve or would you like to change it?

Jim: Well, I'd like to keep looking at the repair field. I guess it's the stuff about on my own that I just can't do, but I'd still like to. If I could do it on my own, I'd feel much better.

Counsellor: So, apart from the 3 weeks which we'll have to change a bit, you still think this is something you want to work towards.

(RECYCLE TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGY)

Jim: Yes, I guess I do.

Counsellor: Good. Then, let's look at the plan we made for achieving this target. You say you've read the material and rehearsed on your own and that's been OK. Practicing with a friend hasn't been nor has making appointments. Let's look at that for a minute. Have you thought of other steps we might take that would help you?

Jim: I just don't know what to suggest. I need more practice but I don't know how to get it.

Counsellor: Do you think more role-playing here with me might help?

Jim: Well it might, but it's too easy. I'm not scared enough.

(REVISE STRATEGY)

Counsellor: What would you think of practicing with another counsellor, one you've never met? We could set it up just like a job interview. If you agree, I could observe and later we could talk about what you did well and what needs improving and then begin to practice that.

Jim: Gee, that sounds like a good idea.

Counsellor: OK, we'll plan for that. Now what about getting 3 job interviews on your own. Do you still want to try to achieve that?

Jim: Yes I do - I know the places I'd like to work but maybe I should start by just trying one.

Counsellor: OK, then let's look at a slightly different target. We'll keep practicing interview skills in a different way and what do you say if we agree to practicing twice and aiming for one job interview in the next two weeks. Then we can see where we are and what else we need to do.

(PLAN STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION)

Jim: Yes, that sounds good. I'd like to try it.

Counsellor: So you feel ready to work again towards this goal Jim?

(VERIFY CLIENT COMMITMENT)

Jim: Yes, I do and I feel a little less discouraged.........

In the above example, the counsellor proceeded very quickly through the first three steps. Jim was able to see some progress, some difference between now and when he started, but not enough progress to permit him to continue independently. With this knowledge, the counsellor recycled to examining the target and from there to examining the plan for target achievement. Notice, as well, the encouragement to Jim to continue his efforts and also the counsellor's checking of Jim's commitment to continue. The counsellor and Jim would return to the EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE again after the new target had been attempted and hopefully achieved.

We do not intend to imply that all cases can result in success all the time. Some clients may not be sufficiently motivated to continue; some may indicate motivation but not follow through with action; some may have hidden agendas which the counsellor has no access to; some may be better assisted by referral to outside agencies.

In these instances, following the same steps outlined above permits closure to occur naturally and non-defensively. Closure becomes a logical consequence of no action to implement a plan to achieve a target and no wish to alter and work on a different target. Let's briefly look at an illustration:

Counsellor:	You still feel this target is the one you want to work on.
Client:	Yes, it's a good goal.
Counsellor:	And you still think the plan we've agreed upon makes sense.
Client:	Yes I do.

Counsellor: But something gets in the way and you don't follow through on the plan.

Client: That seems to happen.

Counsellor: Yes it does, and I'm at a bit of a loss about how to help you proceed from here. It seems to me that until you start to get this plan working for you, I can't do much but encourage you. What do you think? Can you suggest anything else we might do?

Client: I'm not sure-no, I don't know.

Counsellor: Have you considered working with another counsellor here or perhaps considering a referral to another agency. Sometimes a fresh start is the best way to proceed.

Client: I just don't know.

Counsellor: Why don't you take some time and think about it? If you decide you can begin to take some action steps, I'll certainly help. If you think of a better way to continue, I'd be pleased to help You can reach me by telephone here ... ...

It is to be hoped that the above is infrequent, but it is important to note that the system facilitates logical closure when necessary.

Let us re-emphasize however that the prime purpose of this stage is to allow the client to examine his/her progress and through this to provide reinforcement and encouragement to continue independently.

Completion of this stage also provides very smooth movement to the next stage which is TERMINATE COUNSELLING.

Terminate Counselling

The steps of this stage can be visualized as follows:

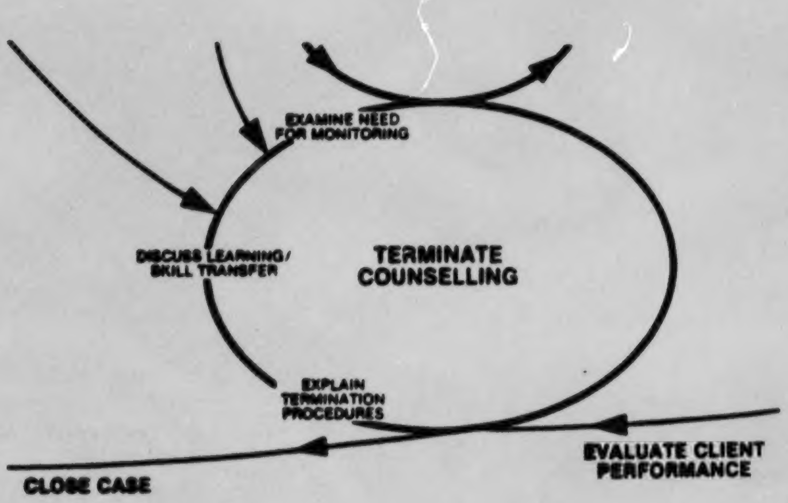

EXAMINE NEED FOR MONITORING
DISCUSS LEARNING/ SKILL TRANSFER
TERMINATE COUNSELLING
EXPLAIN TERMINATION PROCEDURES
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE
CLOSE CASE

Figure 10. Sequence of Steps in Terminate Counselling.

Terminating counselling serves three purposes:

(1) It formalizes the end of counselling and avoids the understandable tendency to continue to talk after the job is done.

(2) It provides an opportunity to discuss how the client can apply what he/she has learned in counselling to new situations the client will face.

(3) It provides a period of monitoring if possible and appropriate, thus leaving the door open to the client to return if the client is unable to continue functioning at the level learned through counselling.

There is always, in any type of counselling, a fine line between allowing, indeed encouraging, a degree of client dependency in order to promote the achievement of a goal and discouraging the continuation of this dependency after the goal has been achieved. This is of course why many counsellors have difficulty knowing how to end their client contacts. There can be a subtle type of resistance to ending a counselling endeavour which has been successful and a discomfort in not knowing how to do it without making the client feel in some way rejected. Clients may resist the end of counselling as well. If the counselling endeavour has been successful, the client has learned in a very supportive atmosphere which may be hard to give up. It's a little like the pregnant women who has enjoyed the experience of pregnancy so much, it was hard to believe she was actually going to have a baby!

In formalizing the end of counselling, the counsellor needs to be prepared to explain termination in a matter of fact way and to be alert to signs of resistance in both him/herself and the client. Counsellors need to be able to understand these feelings of hesitancy and to communicate to clients that they are now able to proceed without the counsellor's assistance. Since there are many other clients entitled to the time and assistance of an employment counsellor, counsellors need to be efficient in knowing when and how to terminate.

This process can be greatly assisted through helping the client to see that the learning in counselling has transfer value. The counsellor's final objective in employment counselling is to equip the client with techniques, skills and knowledge that will permit him/her to function in the future without assistance. Recalling the strategies we have discussed throughout this text, it can readily be seen that they have outside application. The steps involved in decision making can be applied to many types of decisions, not solely those which are employment-related.

The types of learning discussed - locating information, carefully defining problems, finding reinforcing cues, modelling, breaking learning into small sequenced steps - can all be applied to many types of learning. Clients often may not recognize this transfer value unless it is specifically pointed out.

Counsellors will need to discuss how the client can apply the behaviours learned to other situations and how they can obtain reinforcement when required from sources other than the counsellor.

In some instances, monitoring may not be appropriate or necessary. For example if a client's goal was to decide between two training courses and the choice was made and implemented, there may be no need to follow-up. If the client's goal was to find a job in a specific field and he/she found it, similarly there may be no need to follow-up. If, however, the goal involved learning to be continued after counselling (as in Nancy's case for example), monitoring can be a very powerful incentive to a client to continue to progress. Because of time and case-load pressures this is often neglected and understandably so. If it cannot be done with all clients on a regular basis, we strongly recommend that it be done with some. A quick phone call to check on progress; a 10 minute follow-up interview, and a very short note inquiring about progress may be a little time very well spent are all efficient means of monitoring.

Let's continue our example with Nancy and, in the following dialogue, see if you can pick up Nancy's resistance and identify the steps the counsellor is following:

Counsellor: Well, in that case Nancy, it looks like this will be our last session for now. You have made excellent progress and you now seem to have things well back in control. Before you leave today though, there are a couple of things we need to do First, we'll spend a little time talking about how you can apply some of the things you've learned to other problems you might run into. And second, we'll set up some plans to help me keep in touch with how you're progressing.

Nancy: I'm glad about the last part. I mean right now I think I'm doing better but I'm not sure how long it's going to last.

Counsellor: If something doesn't work out as planned, you are certainly welcome to come back and discuss that.

Nancy: It's going to seem a little funny. It's been good for me to discuss with someone how I'm doing. I mean, I think I'm doing OK, but nobody else thinks it's a big deal.

Counsellor: So, even though you've reached your target, you're feeling a little uncomfortable about continuing without our meeting regularly.

Nancy: Yes, I guess so

Counsellor: Well Nancy, I certainly want you to feel you can come back if you find your progress slipping. Can you give me an example of something you think might go wrong?

Nancy: Well, I just might fall back into the old patterns.

Counsellor: Let's think back over how we dealt with your concerns, Nancy. As you think back, can you think of any methods we used which might help you if you start to slip or that might help you in new situations.

Nancy: Well, I think I'd just come back to see you.

Counsellor: Certainly that's one way. But I was thinking of things you might do on your own. One of the purposes of working together is to help you handle things better on your own in the future.

Nancy: Yes, I guess that makes sense.

Counsellor: For example, when you first came in, you were feeling pretty exhausted and overwhelmed by so much to do. Can you recall what we did?

Nancy: Yes, we stopped everything for a couple of weeks to give me some time to rest and think.

Counsellor: Can you see how that might be a useful technique in other situations?

Nancy: Well, I suppose so. It's like taking a time-out when things are just too hectic.

Counsellor: That's right and it needn't always be a two week time-out. But maybe forcing yourself to say "Whoa" might be useful in the future. And what about how you went about looking at alternatives. Is there anything there which you might find useful again?

Nancy: Writing things down helped me. Also that balance sheeting thing we did where I looked at the pros and cons of each - whether it was a loss or a gain to me.

Counsellor: Right. Let's say that you have to face a decision about taking that 5 day work week job offer or waiting to see if a 4 day work week might come up. Could you see yourself trying out that method again?

Nancy: Yes, I could - that might help. I still might want to come back and talk it over though.

Counsellor: That would be fine Nancy. It may also be important for you to have someone a little closer to you with whom you might be able to discuss things without an appointment. Can you think of anyone you might feel comfortable doing this with?

Nancy: Well, maybe my mother would be helpful. I already told her a little about what we've been doing. It's funny - she never worked outside the home but she really knew I was over-extended.

Counsellor: That's great. So there's a resource for you that you didn't know you had and who might be very helpful.

Nancy: Yes, that's true.

Counsellor: I'm wondering if we might also set up a plan to review your progress once in awhile. If we find everything is OK, that would be great. If we find you're having difficulties, we could arrange another meeting.

Nancy: Well... I'd probably feel a lot more comfortable if we did that.

Counsellor: How would it be if you agree to phone me after your next two interviews to let me know how they went.

Nancy: Yes, I'd like to do that.

Counsellor: If one of these jobs works out, we won't have to meet. If it doesn't we can decide then.

Nancy: Sounds fine.

Counsellor: Then perhaps we can arrange to talk on the phone after your month off, just to see that you're still handling your commitments and following the plan.

Nancy: That sounds very good.

Counsellor: OK then, let's leave it there and I'll wait to hear from you. I've really enjoyed working with you Nancy, and I'm very happy about your progress. I'll look forward to your phone call and good luck with the interviews.

Nancy: Thanks a lot.

Counsellor: My pleasure Nancy. Bye now.

Nancy: Goodbye.

In Nancy's case, a brief monitoring was very useful and appropriate. It may not always be so, as mentioned earlier. One would then omit this step and proceed directly from discussing learning transfer to CLOSING THE CASE. It is important in almost all cases to keep the door open, to offer to be of assistance in the future when there is an employment concern which the client cannot handle independently.

Monitor Client Performance

The steps within Monitor Client Performance are self-explanatory and can be visualized as follows:

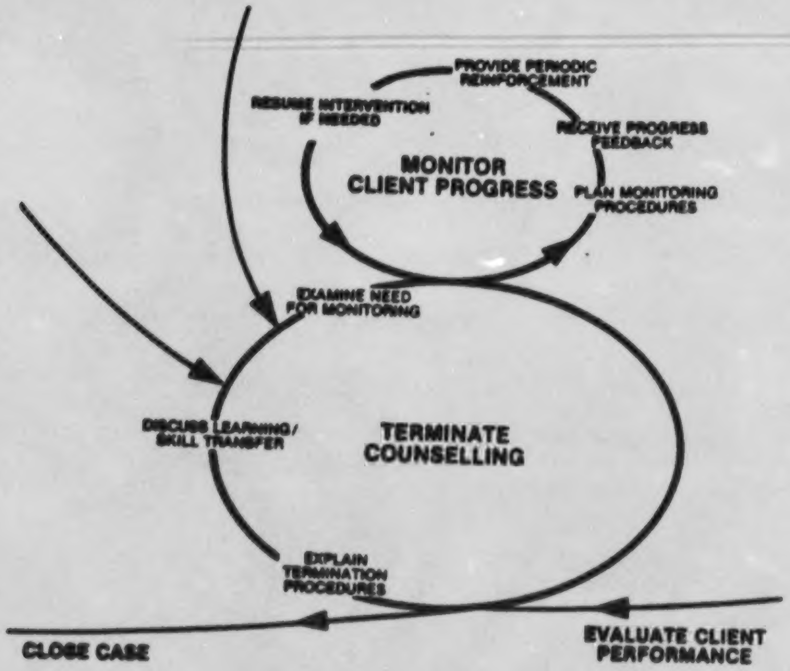

PROVIDE PERIODIC REINFORCEMENT
RESUME INTERVENTION IF NEEDED
RECEIVE PROGRESS FEEDBACK
MONITOR CLIENT PROGRESS
PLAN MONITORING PROCEDURES
EXAMINE NEED FOR MONITORING
DISCUSS LEARNING/ SKILL TRANSFER
TERMINATE COUNSELLING
EXPLAIN TERMINATION PROCEDURES
CLOSE CASE
EVALUATE CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Figure 11. Sequence of Steps in Monitor Client Performance.

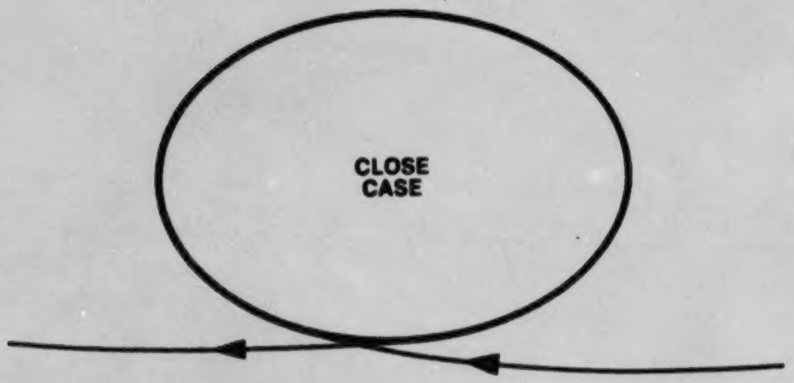
In Nancy's case, the counsellor monitored her performance for two months. This consisted of two telephone calls and one additional fifteen minute interview. Neither of the remaining job interviews resulted in a job offer and Nancy had to decide about taking the five day work week position. She wanted to discuss this but it was more for confirmation of her decision rather than for help in deciding. She decided to take the job in the hope that within six months, it might be reduced to four days. In the interim, she decided to give up volunteer work but planned to return should her work week reduce. One final phone call occurred just before she started the new job. The counsellor expressed confidence that she would continue to progress, invited Nancy to call back in six months to know how the job was progressing and proceeded to close the case.

Close Case

INSERT GRAPHIC →

You will recall at the beginning of this chapter, we discussed that we evaluate for the client the counsellor and for others. We further mentioned that counsellors need to be able to discuss their progress with clients in common, results-oriented language. Keeping written records for purposes of accountability (and counsellor recall) is vital. We recommend the following type of record recorded on index cards or on a copy of the counsellor-client contract:

Counsellor: ____________
Client: Nancy
Employment Concern: 1. Pending lay-off; re-employment necessary
2. Personally over-extended; family, courses, volunteer work, etc.


CLOSE
CASE

Employment Target: reduce commitments

find employment offering 4 day work-week

Interviews: 1½ hours (3-30 minute sessions)

Oct. 12; Oct. 17; Oct. 23

Follow-up: 25 minutes (1-15 minute session, Nov. 15, 2-phone calls)

Outcome: October - commitments reduced

- job search underway

December - new job started - ____________ Company

- 5 day work week; possibility of 4 days in 6 months

- further reduction of outside commitments

Counsellor Comments: No further follow-up anticipated. Client managing well independently.

You may wish to add different details in your own record keeping, those you would find most useful to you. The above is a suggestion only. Note, however, that whatever type of written record you choose to keep, it should contain the following five essential pieces of information:

- client identification

- what was the concern?
- what was the target?
- what were the outcomes?
- how much counselling time did it take to achieve the outcomes?

In this way, you will have a permanent record of concrete counselling achievements recorded in a consistent manner and accessible.

Evaluate Counsellor Performance

INSERT GRAPHIC →

The final stage of the Systematic Employment Counselling model is that of looking as objectively as possible at one's own counselling performance. In the section on Evaluating Client Performance, it was stressed that the client is the judge of his/her performance, achievement and success. Similarly, in Evaluating Counsellor Performance, you are the judge of your own performance. In learning and practicing the Systematic Employment Counselling system, you will have the opportunity to acquire feedback on your performance from fellow counsellors and trainers, but the process of regular evaluation of your work with individual clients remains your responsibility.

The process of evaluation is, of course, an ongoing process throughout your working relationships with clients. You will, in working with the system, be asking yourself continually -How am I doing with this client?; Are we making

COUNSELLOR
SELF-EVALUATION

progress?; Are we moving through the model as we should be?; Are we working as time efficiently as we can?; Are my counselling skills adequate for the needs of my client?

You will be making adjustments and corrections as needed. It is also useful to set aside a formalized period of time (it need not be long) to reflect on your total performance.

In essence, after closing a case, you need feedback on two important areas:

1. How effectively and efficiently did I work with this client?

and

2. What can I learn from this counselling experience to help me work more effectively with future clients?

Obviously, the immediate criterion for successful counsellor performance is whether or not the client has achieved the mutually agreed upon employment counselling target. Taken alone, however, this does relatively little to improve your performance with future clients. It is conceivable that, given a co-operative and long-suffering client, almost any counsellor, using almost any technique, can eventually effect some desired change in a client's behaviour. This measure ignores economy and efficiency and deals only with results.

The counsellor therefore must ponder additional considerations and seek answers which touch on Quantity, Quality, Time Frame and Application of the System.

Consider the following as a guide to your self-evaluation:

Quantity Considerations

What were the measurable outcomes of working with this client?	(Job Placement, Training Placement)
Were these the outcomes we planned?	______________________________
It not, can I explain why they were only partially achieved or not at all achieved?	______________________________
Can I plan to do something different next time based on this experience?	______________________________

Quality Considerations:

What were the not-so-measurable achievements of my client?	(Increased confidence; better self-expression; willingness to experiment; reduced anger, etc.)

Were these achievements in my counselling plan to help this client? ____________________

Did I use/forget to use any specific skills which I want to remember in working with this concern in the future? ____________________

Time Frame:

How much time did I spend in total with this client? ____________________

Could we have achieved the outcomes more quickly? ____________________

If so, how? ____________________

Systematic Employment Counselling System:

Did I follow the stages and steps of the system? ____________________

If I deviated, were my deviations justified? ____________________

Did I use the most effective strategy for working with this particular problem? ______________________________

Are there specific techniques/ strategies I would like to try in the future? ______________________________

Are there parts of the system I want to work more specifically on in the future? ______________________________

Without taking time to reflect on our progress and our "to be improved" areas, it is very easy to become stagnant and stop growing as more effective counsellors. There are three major sources of feedback on your progress. The first is your own experience and your reflection and learning based on that experience. The series of self-evaluation question just listed will serve as a useful guide to tapping your experience as a learning source.

The second major source of feedback is your client(s). Quite obviously, the client as a person has the most immediate stake in the counsellor's performance and is especially qualified to provide valuable feedback. The client knows better than anyone else how the counsellor's techniques were perceived, whether the explanation of the counselling relationship was understood, whether the client felt that the target to be achieved belonged to him/her, whether the tasks assigned were manageable and whether the client would be willing to return to the counsellor. At opportune times during or after an interview or upon completion of a case, the counsellor can seek such information from the client through direct questioning. The expressed reactions of the client can provide important indications of satisfaction and progress. While this is not built in as a specific step in Systematic Employment counselling, you are encouraged to use it for your own learning.

The third major source is, of course, qualified others - your counsellor colleagues, supervisors and trainees. It is possible and desirable to enlist the help of others in the evaluation of one's own counselling. Taping interviews with the client's permission and listening to the interview with a colleague whose judgement and skill you respect is one of the best sources of constant learning. Once several fellow counsellors are trained in the modules of this training program, you can begin to constructively assist each other in areas about which you have a shared understanding. Sharing strategies, discovering more time efficient ways of assisting clients with similar concerns, sharing frustrations and seeking advice are strongly encouraged. In addition, referring to your written records can be very useful. If you have taken a few moments to record what you learned from one counselling experience and what you want to remember for the next, you have a reminder when the next occurs. You can check whether you were able to apply what you hoped to apply. You can self-monitor to see if you can reach similar outcomes within shorter counselling time frames. As a counsellor, one should be accountable to one's employer and the public for the quality of one's performances in terms of counselling and for the quantity of one's results. The first step of accountability is to be accountable to ourselves. To do so effectively, one must use the evaluation resources which are available and which promote increased competency, efficiency, and personal satisfaction.

Summary

This chapter has focused upon procedures and techniques necessary for the systematic evaluation of client and counsellor performance. Also included were techniques for terminating formal counselling contact with a client and procedures for closing the case.

The major purposes of evaluation are to assist the client to continue his/her efforts to resolve employment concerns independently and to improve counsellor effectiveness. One improves one's effectiveness for one's own personal accountability, the organization's accountability and the benefit of future clients. The criterion for counselling effectiveness is client behaviour - what the client does as a result of counselling. Although in a sense evaluation is a continuous process, it is also a formalized process in order to ensure that it receives specific time and attention. The application of Systematic Employment Counselling is improved continuously by the counsellor learning from his/her experience and modifying procedures accordingly.

The process of evaluation should be conducted as indicated on the flowcharts. The major steps in evaluating client performance include determining whether the counselling target has been achieved and deciding the need for further employment counselling. The counsellor terminates formal counselling contact with a client by explaining the rationale for termination, dealing with resistance to termination, conducting transfer of learning and establishing plans, where appropriate, to monitor the client's performance following counselling. Monitoring may take the form of telephone contacts, short check-up interviews or written notes. Through monitoring, the need for additional counselling may be identified.

After closing the case, the counsellor gives special attention to the evaluation of his/her own performance. This evaluation is a process of counsellor reflection, objectively and self-rating and challenges the counsellor to continue to grow, adapt and increase counselling effectiveness. Reactions from clients, colleagues and supervisors are very valuable learning resources in working toward improved performance. Written records kept over a period of time and used as references are also very useful.

Chapter 10

Summary

Overview

We believe that the true test of successful employment counselling is change in the client. The change may be as simple as having information which was not available before counselling; it may be much more complex as in having learned to alter an attitude or a habit which was interfering with successful employment. The client however is not the same following counselling as he/she was before seeking assistance. Through establishing employment targets which are relevant and realistic, developing strategies which move toward problem resolution and continually assessing progress, clients are assisted in initiating change and in acquiring more control and power over issues related to their own employment. The preceding chapters of this self-study manual were designed to provide you with a system to assist clients through the change process. This system provides a structure for you to follow which allows you to establish, maintain and terminate counselling in a positive, action-oriented manner.

You will recall from Chapter 1 that the Systematic Employment Counselling model consists of 9 subsystems beginning with the skills, attitudes and knowledge of the employment counsellor and extending through 8 action functions outlining the process of employment counselling done on a one-to-one basis. The final function of "Counsellor Self-Evaluation" requires that you assess as honestly and objectively as possible your work with each client in an effort to continually improve your skills, attitudes and knowledge. Thus the system comes full circle beginning and ending with the strengths and capabilities of the individual counsellor and focusing on constant improvement for the benefit of future clients.

In Chapters 2-9 we spent considerable time on both the steps to be performed within each of the major subsystems in the model as well as the skills demanded of you to ensure that each subsystem is performed effectively. Let us now look at the entire system with each subsystem delineated. We refer you to Figure 12 on the inside back cover of this text.

It is important to emphasize that the model is a complete system and that each part of the system contributes to the total output of the counselling outcomes to be achieved as a result of using the system well. You may at first find it somewhat awkward and frustrating to perform some of the steps. You may react by finding it initially cumbersome and too much detail to absorb and remember. This however is usually the case when trying to learn any complex endeavor. It would indeed be a rare beginning pianist who did not become frustrated with scales and finger exercises and question their value when the real goal is to play a favourite piece expressively. It takes practice to gain confidence and skill in using the Systematic Employment Counselling model. It takes time to integrate and feel natural using the system.

This final chapter consists of two main sections. The first section deals with typical questions and concerns raised by counsellors learning the system. The second section presents some final thoughts on the principles underlying the use of the model and suggests a few needed extensions and applications of this pioneering effort.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this chapter it is expected that you will be able to:

1. Describe the benefits of a system to skilled counsellors who already relate well to others.
2. Explain why the use of a system is initially an unnatural act.
3. State how a counsellor can use a system to meet the wide range of client needs encountered.
4. Explain why the use of a system is a productive exercise.
5. State several principles underlying the Systematic Employment Counselling model.
6. State at least two areas in which Systematic Employment Counselling could be extended.

Questions and Concerns in Using a Counselling System

All counsellors, in one way or another, seek to help clients change in ways that the clients have described as desirable. At the same time, all experienced counsellors know how difficult it is to engage concurrently in the acts of caring, listening, responding, assisting a client in the change process, providing the right information at the right time and effecting appropriate referrals. Counsellor training programs are usually replete with counselling theories, all of which attempt to conceptualize why people behave as they do. Much effort has been invested in increasing our understanding of human behaviour. Obviously our understanding can never be complete and we continue to need to know and understand more. Attempts to provide a means for utilizing theory have however been sparse. Models, maps or blueprints which assist counsellors to translate theory into counselling practice are difficult to find. Counsellor training programs often give limited assistance in learning how the specific tasks of counselling are to be accomplished. One often gets the impression that the counselling process just takes care of itself and develops its own momentum in some magical way or alternately, one is so focused on specific skills that the counselling process as a whole is lost. The analogy to piano playing may again be useful. One may master the theory and read the notes but the music created may be far from beautiful. Knowing counselling theory and having specific counselling skills is no guarantee that the pieces can be put together in such a way that clients are assisted to change. Having a practical model to follow is not suggested as a replacement for theory but rather as a missing link to assist counsellors to make the translation from theory into practice. It is our contention that counsellors equipped with theory, skills and a vehicle for managing the counselling process are in a position to become highly effective.

As you talk with your colleagues about the model presented in this manual, you may encounter resistance to the idea of a system for counselling. Perhaps you yourself are not convinced that the use of a systematic approach will result in more effective employment counselling practice. We have heard some frequently recurring comments and present them here for your consideration along with our responses. Remember, as we discussed in Chapter 1, all counsellors have a system for counselling, even those who systematically insist on being unsystematic!

1. "I don't need a system. I can already relate to people". The importance of developing a facilitative relationship with a client is fundamental within all counselling theories and underlies any systematic approach to the counselling process. Without skill in developing, fostering and maintaining such a relationship, the counsellor's efforts in helping are severely hampered. The assumption contained in the above statement is however that counselling is relating. True, clients on occasion may require nothing more than someone to talk with and someone who is understanding in order to put into action resolutions to their own difficulties. On most occasions, however, relating is insufficient and the counsellor who cannot go beyond this to assist a client to make decisions, alter behaviours and become more self-reliant is helpful in a

a very limited way if at all. Client targets are unlikely to be attained in the absence of a facilitative relationship; they are also unlikely to be attained given only this condition. The purpose of a system is to use the facilitative relationship as a necessary condition for planned action for change.

2. "All my life I've tried to get away from systems. I certainly don't want to impose this sort of thinking upon a client." System has become a synonym for "establishment" for many individuals. Powerful negative emotions are expressed when system is identified with the civil, military, political, religious and industrial establishments of any country. "The system must be changed!" "We have to work within the system!" Expressions such as these are common. But to accept this limited connotation of the term "system" is to ignore the elaborate systems that have been developed to assist people in areas of education, psychology, psychiatry, and human medicine, among others. Were we to free ourselves of all systems, many of the most advanced and most humane aspects of our culture would no longer be available to us.

3. "The system is too mechanical. I feel like a machine and nothing seems natural or spontaneous." This comment might be made by a new surgical intern, a recruit for the football team, a prospective actor, a flight pilot trainee, or an employment counsellor. Learning any system is, by definition, a change process. During the early stages of training, the learning task is taxing, repetitive, and unrewarding. When a golfer seeks help in driving from the club pro, suggestions may be made to change the positions or movement of the feet,

legs, hips, arms, and head. This may result in a very unnatural feeling and may predictably result in worse initial results than before the pro was contacted. However, as each part of the body performs its function properly, increasingly less direct attention must be paid to it. When the golfer "has it all together," the others on the course may remark, "Look at that natural swing." The golfer knows otherwise! Counsellors also must go through a phase of unnaturalness until all components of the counselling process are coordinated and practiced in consort. As each can be performed with increased ease, a more natural feeling returns.

4. "I'm too creative to be tied down to a system. It just wouldn't work for me". A truly creative person without a system upon which to rely has a problem. Without a foundation upon which to build, one may be unable to express this creativity meaningfully to others. Imagine a musical composer who was unaware that a scale was comprised of seven notes and chromatic intervals. Imagine an artist who didn't know that the elements of design were governed by the principles of harmony, contrast, and proportion. The musical scale and the elements of design are the foundations for the elaborate systems within which musical composers and artists work. From early cumbersome efforts in using their systems, they become increasingly able to perform the routine quickly and become more expressive in shading and fine artistic adjustments. Similarly, creative counsellors who routinely employ a system can use creativity in adjusting the system to meet the needs of the individual client and thus become more effective practitioners.

5. "My clients aren't all the same, so I can't use a system for counselling. I have to invent a way to work with each client who comes in." Many counsellors are very taxed in meeting the wide variety of needs presented by their clients. However varied the clientele, some predictable concerns are invariably reported by clients. Each of us must carefully consider how to best assist clients having the most predictable, or most frequently occurring, concerns. This is the beginning of a counselling system. If the system can be designed flexibly so that an increased variety of concerns can be handled through its use, the system will be more functional. Systematic Employment Counselling, for example, includes a process for handling referrals, constructing a model of client concerns, and deciding upon employment targets for counselling that are generally applicable to all clients, but provides for different strategies that might be used with specific client concerns. When a counsellor is faced with a new concern that is reported by several clients, the counsellor is encouraged to develop a subsystem for coping with this concern. Once this subsystem has been devised, tested, and revised, the counsellor has a reliable source of assistance rather than continually "flying by the seat of the pants."

6. "Look my clients just want jobs. I don't want to get bogged down by using a system." All counsellors have some type of system to direct their counselling behaviour. We have never encountered a counsellor who did not have at least some general idea on how counselling should be conducted. We have frequently encountered counsellors who very understandably have difficulty defining what they do in counselling and tend to talk in very fuzzy terminology. Certainly

the great majority of clients want jobs and while they may say they want any job, only those truly in dire economic circumstances or whose self-esteem in terms of the labour market is very low actually mean it. As has been made clear in this text, the type of job we want and have impacts powerfully on how we see and feel about ourselves. Following a system with a series of check-points helps to assure that the resolution to the employment concern is based on what the client needs, that opportunities have been built in to explore options, to practice new behaviours and to follow through on a plan for change. The counsellor need not devote an undue amount of attention to deciding on what the next steps in counselling should be. The steps are clear and instead the focus can be much more importantly on the clients' concerns and his/her progress in moving systematically toward attaining the established target in a time efficient manner. The temptation to hand out jobs because they are available and because one isn't sure what else to do is greatly reduced by using a system productively.

7. "I have my own system and it works." Great! Systematic Counselling is one example of a system that has been developed, tested, and revised. However, there may be many other examples. Any counsellor who has developed a system that works reliably and produces effective results has reason to be proud of the accomplishment. Hopefully, the system is in written form so that others might learn about the system and determine whether or not it would meet their needs also!

The above list of questions and comments is not intended to be exhaustive. In reading and thinking about this text, you may have questions and concerns which are not addressed here. Take a moment to jot them down so they can be discussed at the training course. The comparative newness of the model assures that some skepticism will exist. If any of us still has only a partial understanding of the system's purpose and/or has not acquired practice in using it, skepticism is to be expected. In addition, systems applied to counselling in general and employment counselling in particular are new and cannot be expected to be perfect. Discussion, suggestions, and queries are therefore to be welcomed.

Principles of Systematic Employment Counselling

Our acceptance of any system is premised upon our understanding of its intent. If we are to consider Systematic Employment Counselling as a viable system in our CECs, we need to know some of the principles upon which it is based. These principles have been implied throughout the previous chapters, but are placed here in abbreviated form for further consideration. Each principle represents a condition that we believe must exist if Systematic Employment Counselling is to be effective. In each instance, following the statement of the principle, we have provided some supplementary comments that explain or support its intent. The principles are:

1. "Systematic Employment Counselling is a learning process, not a healing process." Learning or re-learning is, in essence, what Systematic Employment Counselling is all about. The role of the counsellor is primarily one of facilitating learning by clients.

The idea of counsellor as healer and curer, rather than as educator, has been a disservice to both practicing counsellors and to clients. It has led counsellors to the erroneous belief that they should have answers and solutions for other's life difficulties; it has led clients to the erroneous belief that only the sick or incapacitated seek and benefit from counselling.

Many of your clients will indeed have learning deficits and your work, time and attention must be given to assist clients to learn or to re-learn the missing pieces to their successful employment.

2. "A key concept in facilitating learning in Systematic Employment Counselling is the client's concept of self:" A major goal of Systematic Employment Counselling is to provide clients with the knowledge and coping skills which contribute to a sense of personal power, particularly in areas of goal setting, decision-making, and self-management. Depending on personal need and interest, other coping skills dealing with conflict resolution, time management, and interpersonal relationship-building may be of significance as well. To feel one has lost control can be personally devastating and can block openness to learning. Timidity, depression and anxiety are frequent by-products of a felt loss of power. These emotions can prevent the possibility of learning.

Systematic Employment Counselling should be directed towards building or supporting the client's sense of self-esteem and personal power. This is achieved through the quality of the relationship established with each client but equally important through the actions of establishing achievable employment targets, planning steps to provide success experiences, structuring opportunities for practice and feedback and providing the necessary encouragement until the target is reached.

There is a biblical parable that if you meet a hungry man and you give him a fish, he will not be hungry for that day. But if you teach him to fish, then he will be able to feed himself each day thereafter. Systematic Employment Counselling should be construed as an activity by means of which people are taught to fish.

3. "Clients must be active participants in the Systematic Employment Counselling process in order to learn." This is perhaps self-evident in the above comments but is of such importance that it deserves double emphasis. In order that clients learn to successfully assume more control and responsibility for themselves, learning must be viewed as a two-way process. The counsellor knows the process of counselling, has a number of counselling skills and a vast amount of information; he/she does not know the client. This needs to be learned. The client knows and feels his/her difficulties in terms of employment, he/she needs to learn both from the counsellor and as many other helpful sources as possible in order to resolve the difficulties interfering with employment.

Systematic Employment Counselling does not involve doing something to your client to make him/her feel better; it involves learning together to understand concerns, translating them into employment targets and charting relevant action plans to achieve them.

4. "Systematic Employment Counselling is goal based." Both you and your client share in the delineation of counselling goals. When necessary, these goals are further specified as employment targets. Usually only one employment target is attempted at a given time, but a series of employment targets may be attempted ultimately. Success in attaining one employment target provides reinforcement for attempting other employment targets. When the designated employment targets have been reached, employment counselling is terminated. Although goals may shift during the process of counselling, Systematic Employment Counselling cannot proceed without goal delineation.

5. "Systematic Employment Counselling focuses on a client's current behaviour and problem resolution." The typical client with whom you work requires that you focus on current behaviour, not past events. Your role is to help a client to make a goal directed use of his/her options within a given life situation. To decide, to initiate a plan of action, to undertake a learning project, to start a job, to begin training, to try out new behaviour all imply making a goal directed use of one's possibilities within one's life situation.

6. "The counselling interview is only a 'testing ground' for the use of newly learned behaviour." It is important that your client 'try on' new behaviour in a safe setting and receive encouragement from you concerning his/her performance. However, both you and your client must remember that you are working to develop skills that can be transferred to the natural environment - the home, the place of work, the recreation centre, the school, the street.

Your client must eventually be able to function independently and be able to transfer his/her learning to new concerns as they arise. Part of your role is to structure for such learning transfer before termination of counselling.

7. "The employment counsellor has a responsibility for monitoring client post-interview behaviour." The effectiveness of counselling cannot be determined unless some form of record-keeping is devised that provides data concerning client behaviour in the natural setting. This monitoring is designed to determine whether transfer of learning has indeed taken place and to allow you the opportunity for providing assistance to the client if the transfer is less than desirable or if the client is having some trouble in sustaining the improvement attained in employment counselling.

8. "Systematic Employment Counselling is a self-corrective process." A counsellor using this process not only maintains records concerning client behaviour but also develops a means of determining whether or not he/she is being effective. Client reports, comments from fellow professionals and supervisors, and the counsellor's self-assessment are all important sources of information. From this information the counsellor can determine which practices and procedures have been effective with which clients. This information then can be used to select or design procedures for working with future clients more effectively. It is important to note that all counsellors have models or patterns that they use. Many models, however, are superficial or are focused upon only a part of the counselling process. Systematic Employment Counselling presents a logical sequence of counsellor actions and as such provides readily for self-correction.

From these principles we can note an emphasis upon shared counsellor-client responsibility in all phases of the employment counselling process. The client determines whether or not to participate in employment counselling, decides the employment targets to be achieved through counselling, and is responsible for carrying the learning from the employment counselling setting into the natural environment. The employment counsellor shares the responsibility for setting meaningful employment targets, has an objective understanding of the client's concern, is the initiator of the learning process devised to reach the established employment targets, and is responsible for arranging a viable monitoring system to determine whether or not the skills have indeed transferred into the natural setting.

In presenting the Systematic Employment Counselling model, we stress the need for a close working relationship between employment counsellor and the client. Openness and commitment to learn on the part of both is essential.

Extensions of Systematic Employment Counselling

The Systematic Employment Counselling model is an attempt to specify the tasks performed by the employment counsellor at each stage of the employment counselling process. It covers all stages of the process from the counsellor's reviewing a referral to the closing of the counselling case and the evaluation of the counsellor's performance in handling it.

The system was designed to provide a rational guide for both counsellor training and counselling practice. We hope the system will provide the employment counsellor with a blueprint for conducting the counselling process yet contain sufficient flexibility so that a wide range of client concerns may be handled by a counsellor proficient in its use. What, you may ask, are its limitations? Is it applicable for working with clients in all settings? Hardly. Any model must be adapted as required to fit the requirements and limitations of different working environments. If both the system and the counsellor are flexible, the system can assist in working effectively with a wide range of clients and concerns.

Our efforts have been to come up with a model designed for one-to-one counselling in an employment counselling setting. These same basic steps can be extended and adapted to other spheres of counselling practice. For example:

1. Environmental Change: In recent years much discussion has centered upon whether counsellors should assist the client to adjust to the environment or change the environment so that it accommodates the client. Our Systematic Employment Counselling process is directed toward helping the client to adjust.

But sometimes this is a less helpful counsellor act than addressing the workings of the environment. The environment, the institution, or society may be making unfair demands upon the client. Counsellors on such occasions need a companion map to guide their efforts in bringing about changes in environments that negatively affect individuals.

2. Special Populations: This system is designed to be useful with a broad range of employment concerns expressed by people of many ages and educational levels. We recognize that this model would be incomplete for counsellors working in counselling settings focused on providing assistance to severely neurotic adults, people with severe addictive habits and extremely young children. Perhaps the model might offer the beginnings for a more specialized system. What would be required would be an assessment of the most frequently occurring client needs within each given population, analysis of the process and goals confronting counsellors and clients and the design of a system to meet the needs of the clientele to be served.

3. Consulting: Increasingly, counsellors are required to liaise not only with employers but with a variety of outside community agencies in order to provide full service. Our model will require adaptation in order to provide employment

counsellors with a blueprint to follow in working with other than worker-clients. This adaptation will be designed for a future training module entitled "Employment Counselling and Community Resource Utilization."

In each of the above instances as well as in employment counselling, we have worked too long without functional models. Our basic system, hopefully, will significantly improve the delivery of employment counselling as well as serve as a model for the development of other systems designed for some or all of the "frontiers" mentioned above.

Summary

Systems for counselling are in their infancy. Because of their newness, we have an understandable reluctance to accept them. The system discussed throughout this text, Systematic Employment Counselling, is not intended as a means of explaining human development or personality, but rather as a vehicle for case management to be used in conjunction with some of the existing theories of counselling.

The system as presented was intended for use primarily in individual employment counselling. We acknowledge the need for adaptations and extensions of this model to serve other client populations and to provide counselling assistance through other models.

Finally, the model of Systematic Employment Counselling, or any other system, is only a tool that can be used by a skillful counsellor to improve the likelihood that the counsellor will function in such a way that the client is helped. The test of successful employment counselling is really not what the counsellor does or doesn't do; rather, it is whether or not the client is helped to change in the directions mutually agreed-upon.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Describe why a system may be useful to a person who already relates well to others.

2. Explain why the use of a system is initially an unnatural act.

3. State how a counsellor can use a system to meet the wide range of client needs encounterd.

4. Explain why the use of a system is a productive exercise.

5. State several principles that underly the Systematic Employment Counselling model.

6. State at least two areas in which Systematic Employment Counselling can be extended.

   1.

   2.

Closing Comments

It is now time for us to conclude the relationship we have had with each of you as you have read and reacted to our self-study manual. The intensity that has gone into our efforts to familiarize you with the systematic approach to employment counselling makes it difficult now for us to let you go. You have had this feeling before as you entered the termination phase of the counselling relationship! You will experience this feeling again, upon completion of our workshop. Hopefully, the practice you have had in completing this self-study manual together with your exposure to our workshop will enable you to use the Systematic Employment Counselling model efficiently and effectively. We also hope that, as you become more comfortable with the Systematic Employment Counselling model, you can develop your own employment counselling style and apply our system with some ingenuity. Creative application of Systematic Employment Counselling suggests that you have not become "bogged under" by the methodology but are in a position to adapt, expand or vary it as the need arises. We wish you well!

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